

PERSEPOLIS 2

THE STORY OF A RETURN



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PERSEPOLIS 2

MARJANE SATRAPI



PANTHEON



THE SOUP

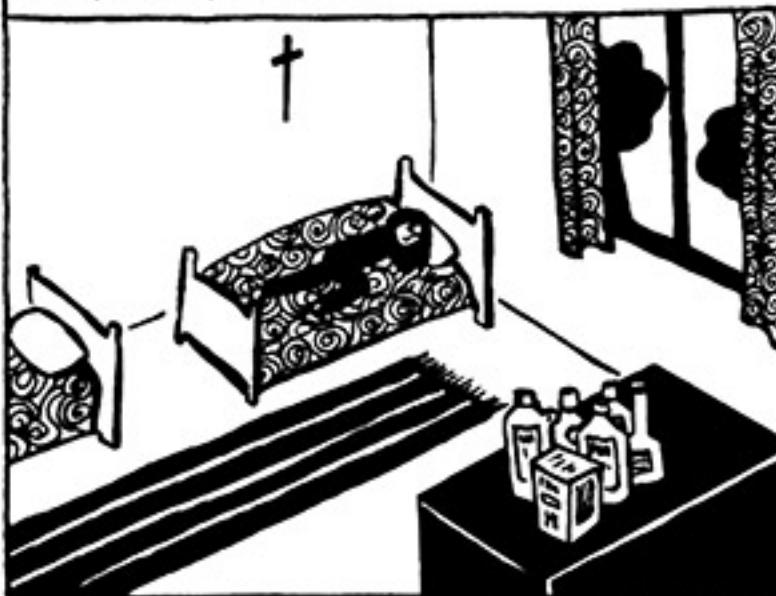
NOVEMBER 1984. I AM IN AUSTRIA. I HAD COME HERE WITH THE IDEA OF LEAVING A RELIGIOUS IRAN FOR AN OPEN AND SECULAR EUROPE AND THAT 2020, MY MOTHER'S BEST FRIEND, WOULD LOVE ME LIKE HER OWN DAUGHTER.



ONLY HERE I AM! SHE LEFT ME AT A BOARDING HOUSE RUN BY NUNS.



MY ROOM WAS SMALL, AND FOR THE FIRST TIME IN MY LIFE I HAD TO SHARE MY SPACE WITH ANOTHER PERSON.



I HADN'T MET HER YET. I ONLY KNEW THAT HER NAME WAS LUCIA.



I WONDERED WHAT SHE WOULD LOOK LIKE.



EUROPE, THE ALPS, SWITZERLAND, AUSTRIA.. FROM THIS I DEDUCED THAT SHE WOULD BE LIKE HEIDI.



I HAD BEEN IN VIENNA ELEVEN DAYS. ZOZO AND HER DAUGHTER SHIRIN, WHOM I HAD KNOWN DURING MY CHILDHOOD, HAD COME TO GET ME AT THE AIRPORT.



SHIRIN WAS AS I REMEMBERED HER. HOWEVER, I DETECTED SOMETHING UNKIND IN THE LOOK HER MOTHER GAVE ME.



YOU HAVEN'T CHANGED MUCH. WELL, YES! NOW YOU HAVE LONG HAIR!!

YOU HAVEN'T EITHER. YOU'RE THE SAME.



IT'S GOING TO BE COOL TO GO TO SCHOOL WITHOUT A VEIL, TO NOT HAVE TO BEAT ONESelf EVERY DAY FOR THE WAR MARTYRS...



HAVE YOU SEEN THESE? THEY'RE REALLY FASHIONABLE. THEY'RE TO PROTECT YOUR EARS FROM THE COLD. DO YOU WANT TO TRY THEM ON?

NO THANKS!



THIS IS MY RASPBERRY-SCENTED PEN, BUT I HAVE STRAWBERRY AND BLACKBERRY ONES, TOO.

?



DO YOU WANT TO PUT ON SOME LIPSTICK? I LOVE PEARLY PINK. IT'S VERY IN!!!

HMPHH...



WHAT A TRAITOR! WHILE PEOPLE WERE DYING IN OUR COUNTRY, SHE WAS TALKING TO ME ABOUT TRIVIAL THINGS.



PROBABLY BECAUSE MY FATHER WASN'T INCOMPETENT...





*ALDI IS A SUPERMARKET AND LINKS MEANS LEFT IN GERMAN.

IT HAD BEEN FOUR YEARS SINCE I'D SEEN SUCH A WELL-STOCKED STORE.



THE FIRST AISLE I HEADED FOR
WAS THE ONE WITH SCENTED
DETERGENTS.



WE COULDN'T FIND THEM IN
IRAN ANYMORE.



I FILLED THE CART WITH ALL
KINDS OF PRODUCTS.

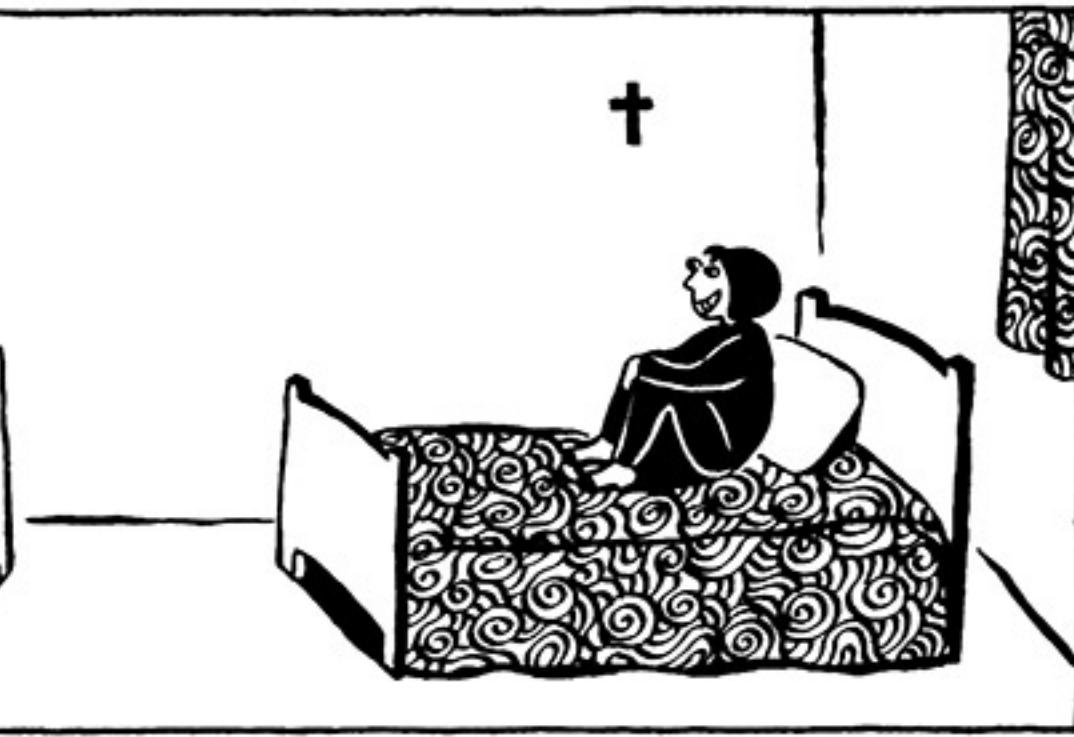


GIVEN MY RESTRICTED BUDGET,
I TOOK TWO BOXES OF PASTA.



I HANDED OVER A 100 SHILLING
BILL. LUCKILY, IT WAS
ENOUGH, OTHERWISE I WOULD
HAVE BEEN ASHAMED.





I OFFERED HER SOME OF THE PISTACHIOS I'D BROUGHT WITH ME, A PRESENT FROM MY UNCLE. THEY ARE A SPECIALTY OF IRAN THAT IS OFTEN GIVEN WHEN SOMEONE IS GOING ABROAD. WE CONSIDER OUR PISTACHIOS TO BE THE WORLD'S BEST...



... AS WE CONSIDER MANY OF OUR THINGS TO BE.

LUCIA MADE ME A KNORR SOUP, "CREAM OF MUSHROOM."



I DIDN'T LIKE IT MUCH.



MAGST DU FERNSEHEN?

FERNSEHEN?

FENS, FUNS,
FENR, ...
FENÊTRE!!!

* WINDOW IN FRENCH.



WARTE MAL!

DAS IST EIN FERNSEHEN.

AH! TV!
IT'S THE SAME THING.



SO WE WENT TO THE TV ROOM, WHICH WAS ON THE GROUND FLOOR.



EVERYONE WAS WATCHING A MOVIE. THEY SEEMED TO BE ENJOYING THEMSELVES. EXCEPT ME! I WAS HEARING "ACHS" AND "OCHS," "ICHIS" AND "MICHIS," BUT NOTHING THAT I COULD UNDERSTAND.



I DECIDED TO LEAVE DISCREETLY.





TYROL

EVERY MORNING, I WAS RUDELY AWAKENED BY THE SOUND OF LUCIA'S HAIR DRYER.



IT WAS MY VERY OWN ALARM CLOCK. SET FOR 6:30 ON THE DOT.



WOKEN BY A HAIR DRYER TO THEN RETURN TO A SCHOOL WHERE I HAD NO FRIENDS.



BUT IT WAS TO BE EXPECTED. I WAS ARRIVING IN THE MIDDLE OF THE TRIMESTER AND CLIQUES HAD ALREADY FORMED.



AND THEN THERE WAS THE FIRST MATH TEST. I DISTINGUISHED MYSELF BY MY HIGH LEVEL.



THIS GRADE WON ME A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF ATTENTION. I WAS VERY POPULAR WHEN IT CAME TO MATH HOMEWORK.

THEN I BEGAN TO DRAW CARICATURES OF THE TEACHERS. I HAD GOTTFEN INTO THIS HABIT WITH MY TEACHERS IN IRAN.



THE DIFFERENCE BEING THAT THEY WERE ALL VEILED, THEREFORE MUCH EASIER TO DRAW.

THESE PORTRAITS ALSO BROUGHT ME SOME GOODWILL.



BESIDES, MY MISTAKES IN FRENCH MADE ME SOMEONE OF INTEREST. IT HAD BEEN THREE YEARS SINCE I'D PRACTICED MY FRENCH, AFTER THE CLOSING OF THE BILINGUAL SCHOOLS BY THE ISLAMIC GOVERNMENT.



* I MEANT A TRIANGLE.

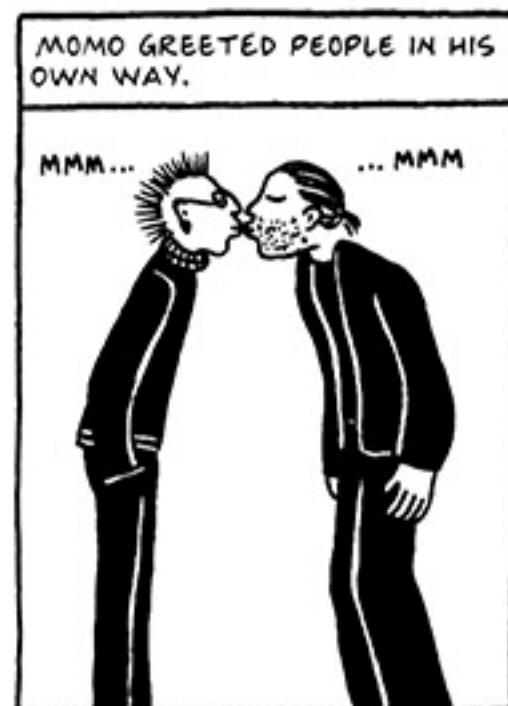


WELL, AT LEAST I EXISTED.

THINGS EVOLVED. AFTER SOME TIME, JULIE, THE SULLEN GIRL IN THE SECOND ROW, TOOK AN INTEREST IN ME. SHE WAS AN EIGHTEEN-YEAR-OLD FRENCH GIRL, IN A CLASS WHERE THE AVERAGE AGE WAS FOURTEEN.



I UNDERSTOOD LATER THAT HER RESERVE CAME FROM THE FACT THAT SHE CONSIDERED THE OTHERS TO BE SPOILED CHILDREN. BUT I WAS DIFFERENT. I HAD KNOWN WAR.



AN ECCENTRIC, A PUNK, TWO ORPHANS AND A THIRD-WORLDER, WE MADE QUITE A GROUP OF FRIENDS. THEY WERE REALLY INTERESTED IN MY STORY. ESPECIALLY MOMO! HE WAS FASCINATED BY DEATH.



CHRISTMAS VACATION WAS APPROACHING. EVERYONE WAS TALKING ABOUT THEIR PLANS.



FRIDAY, DECEMBER 22, 1984. THE STREETS WERE PACKED. THE HOLIDAY FRENZY HAD INFECTED EVERYONE. I THOUGHT OF THIERRY WHEN HE TALKED ABOUT IT BEING "GOOD FOR BUSINESS."



MY STREET, THOUGH, WAS DESERTED. THERE WEREN'T ANY STORES.



WHEN I GOT BACK, I FOUND LUCIA. STILL FAITHFUL TO HER POST.





LUCIA'S PARENTS WERE INCREDIBLE. THEY WERE UNLIKE ANYONE I'D EVER MET. HER TYROLEAN AUSTRIAN FATHER WORE PANTS MADE OF LEATHER. HER TYROLEAN ITALIAN MOTHER HAD A MUSTACHE. ONLY HER SISTER REMINDED ME OF HEIDI.



THEIR GERMAN WAS DIFFICULT TO UNDERSTAND.

AND INDEED WE WENT TO CHURCH FOR MIDNIGHT MASS.



IT ENDED AT THREE IN THE MORNING!

LUCIA'S FAMILY HAD NEVER SEEN ANY IRANIANS. I WAS THEREFORE INVITED OVER EVERY DAY BY AN UNCLE AND AN AUNT WHO WANTED TO GET TO KNOW ME.



MY GERMAN WAS RUDIMENTARY, THEIRS UNUSUAL. A COUSIN WHO HAD SPENT FOUR YEARS IN FRANCOPHONE SWITZERLAND ENJOYED ACTING AS MY TRANSLATOR.



SHE SAYS THAT SHE LIKES TYROL A LOT.



SHE SAYS THAT TYROLEANS ARE VERY NICE.



WE SPOKE OF EVERYTHING.

IT'S WONDERFUL TO HAVE INTERNATIONAL FRIENDS.



AS OPPOSED TO MY SCHOOL FRIENDS' FAVORITE SUBJECTS OF CONVERSATION, WE NEVER TOUCHED ON WAR, OR DEATH.

FINALLY THE DAY OF DEPARTURE ARRIVED.

YOU KNOW, I'M A CABINETMAKER. I MADE THIS FRAME ESPECIALLY FOR YOU.

SCHATZI,* A CANDIED APPLE AND SOME FRUIT FOR THE ROAD.



... LUCIA WAS MY SISTER.

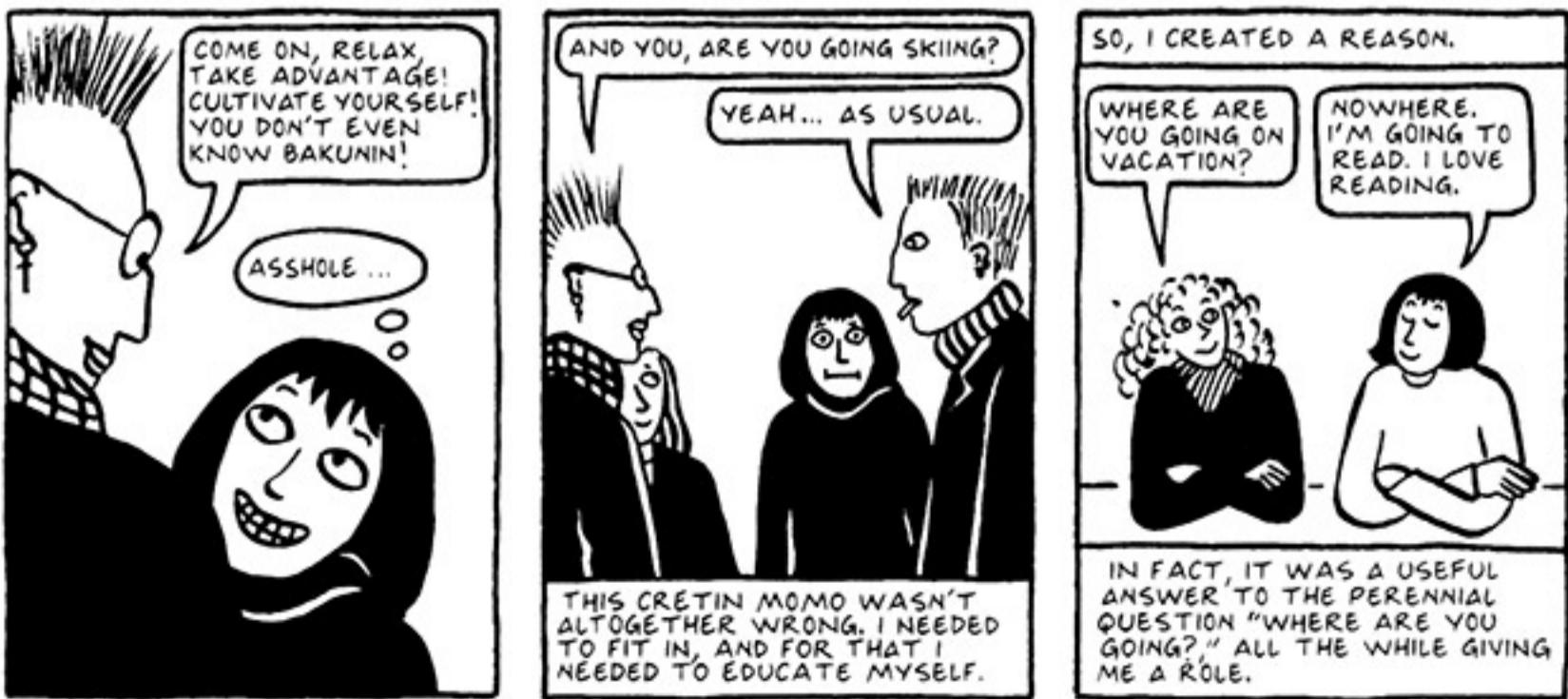
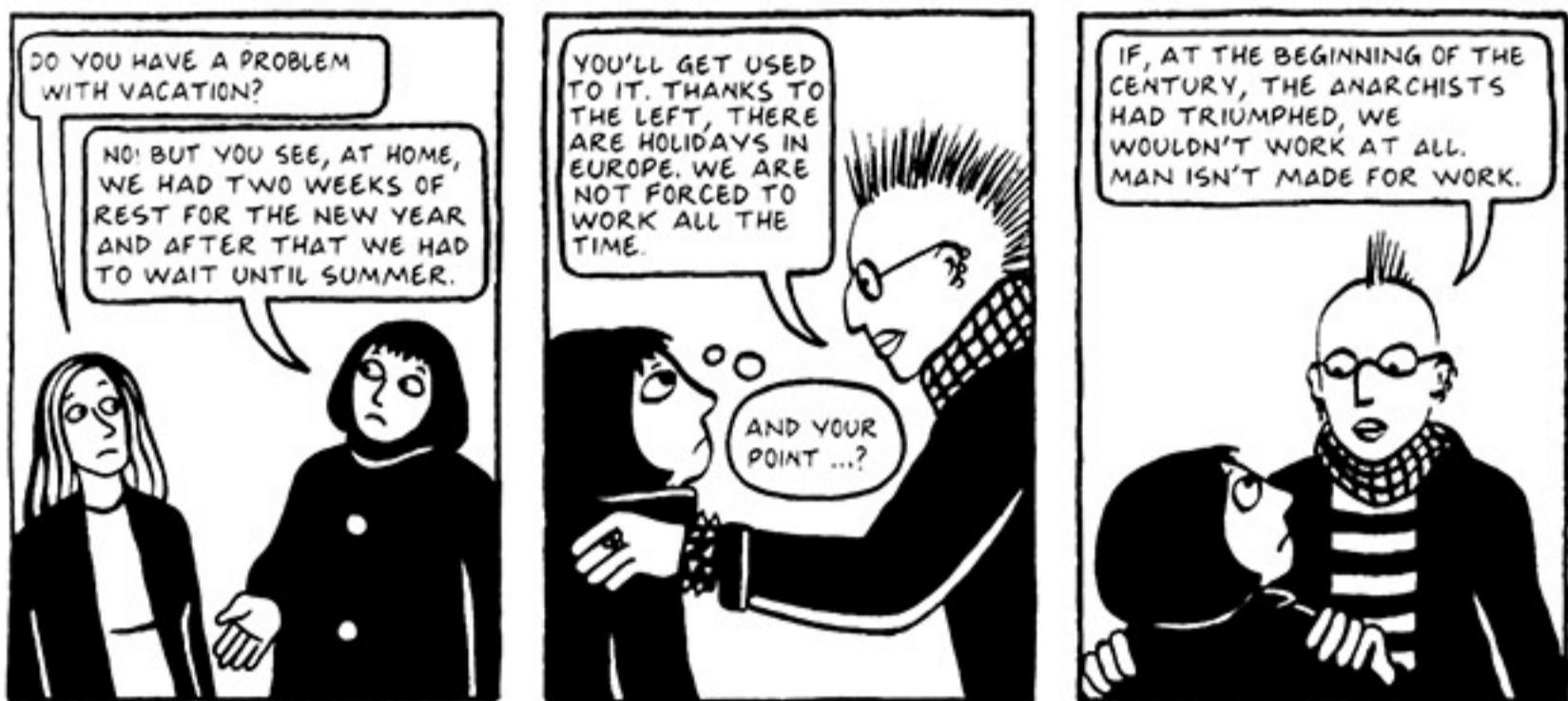
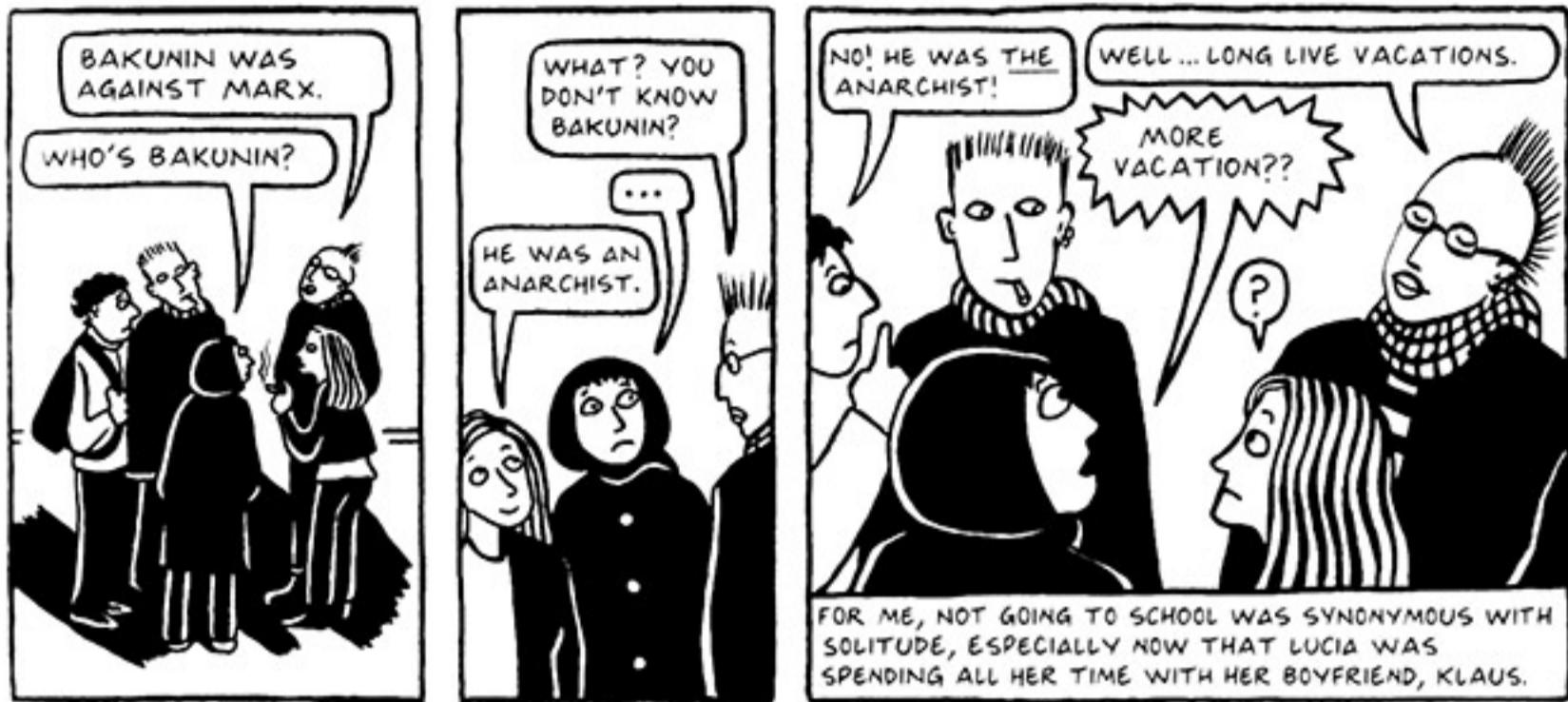


AFTER THIS TRIP, I NEVER COMPLAINED ABOUT HER HAIR DRYER.

* DEAR



PASTA



SO THEY WENT OFF SKIING AND I SET MYSELF TO READING. I STARTED WITH BAKUNIN. I LEARNED THAT HE WAS RUSSIAN, THAT HE HAD BEEN EXCLUDED FROM THE FIRST INTERNATIONAL* AND THAT HE REJECTED ALL AUTHORITY, ESPECIALLY THAT OF THE STATE.



ASIDE FROM THAT, I DIDN'T UNDERSTAND MUCH OF HIS PHILOSOPHY, AS SURELY MOMO DIDN'T EITHER.

THEN, I STUDIED THE HISTORY OF THE COMMUNE.



I CONCLUDED THAT THE FRENCH RIGHT OF THIS EPOCH WERE WORTHY OF MY COUNTRY'S FUNDAMENTALISTS.

THEN, I TURNED MY ATTENTION TO SARTRE, MY COMRADES' FAVORITE AUTHOR.

"THE NOTION OF CONSCIOUSNESS COMES FROM MAN'S LIVED EXPERIENCE."



I FOUND HIM A LITTLE ANNOYING...

* FIRST INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF COMMUNIST COOPERATORS.



WHEN I'D HAD ENOUGH OF READING, I WENT TO THE SUPERMARKET.

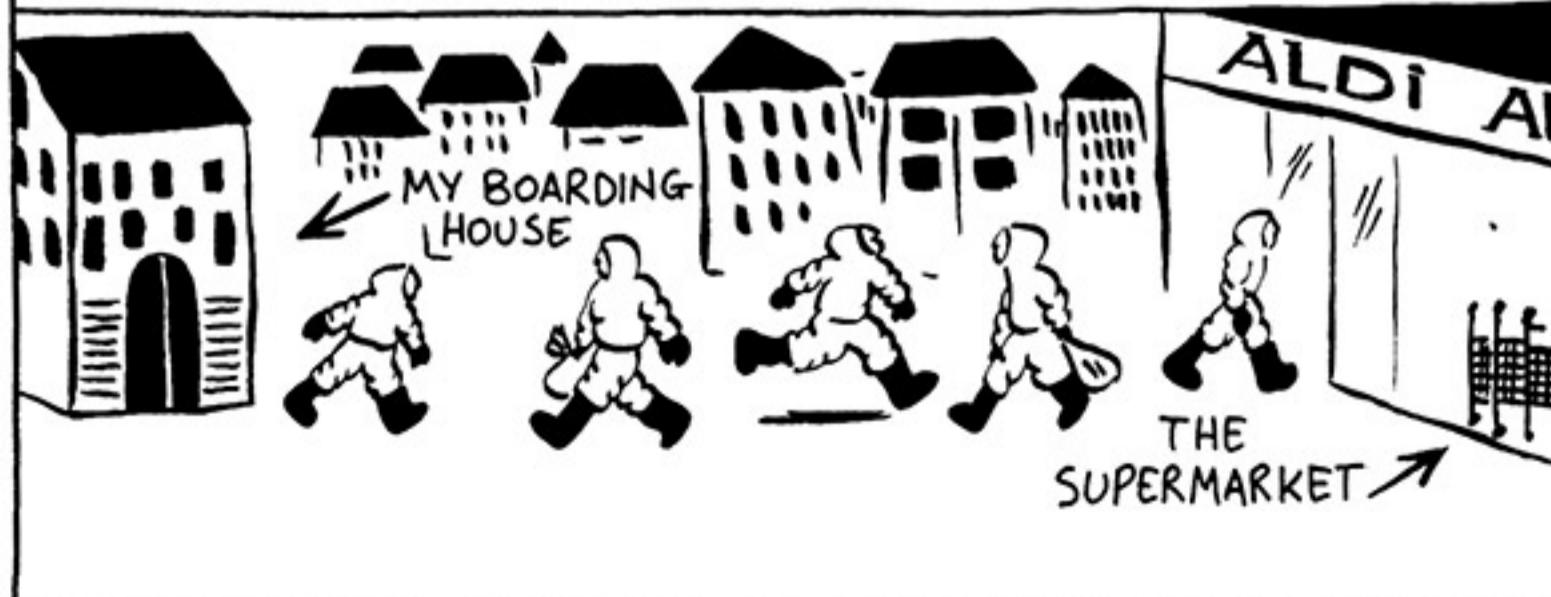


IT WAS SO COLD THAT I HAD THE BRIGHT IDEA OF WEARING MY SKI SUIT, BROUGHT FROM TEHRAN, TO GO OUT.



DECKED OUT LIKE THIS IN VIENNA, I FELT LIKE I WAS ON THE SLOPES OF INNSBRUCK, CLOSE TO MY FRIENDS.

I WAS SO BORED THAT TO BUY FOUR DIFFERENT PRODUCTS, I WOULD GO TO THE SUPERMARKET AT LEAST FOUR TIMES.



THE
SUPERMARKET

IF I'D HAD ANYTHING FUN TO DO, I DON'T THINK I WOULD EVER HAVE READ AS MUCH AS I DID.



TO EDUCATE MYSELF, I HAD TO UNDERSTAND EVERYTHING. STARTING WITH MYSELF, ME, MARJI, THE WOMAN. SO I THREW MYSELF INTO READING MY MOTHER'S FAVORITE BOOK.



I READ "THE SECOND SEX." SIMONE EXPLAINED THAT IF WOMEN PEED STANDING UP, THEIR PERCEPTION OF LIFE WOULD CHANGE.



SEATED, IT WAS MUCH SIMPLER. AND, AS AN IRANIAN WOMAN, BEFORE LEARNING TO URINATE LIKE A MAN, I NEEDED TO LEARN TO BECOME A LIBERATED AND EMANCIPATED WOMAN.



SHE HAD READ ME SOME EXCERPTS, BUT I WAS A LITTLE YOUNG.



... ??

SO I TRIED. IT RAN LIGHTLY DOWN MY LEFT LEG. IT WAS A LITTLE DISGUSTING.



AND THEN CAME THE DAY. THE FAMOUS DAY IN THE MONTH OF FEBRUARY WHEN I WAS PREPARING MY ETERNAL SPAGHETTI.



I WAS VERY HUNGRY, SO HUNGRY THAT ONE PLATE WOULDN'T HAVE BEEN ENOUGH.



I WENT DOWNSTAIRS WITH MY POT TO WATCH TV IN THE REFECTIONY.



I LOVED THAT. AT MY PARENTS' HOUSE, IT WAS STRICTLY FORBIDDEN. "INSPECTOR DERRICK" WAS ON. THE NUNS LIKED IT A LOT.



WHEN SUDDENLY THE MOTHER SUPERIOR BLOCKED MY LINE OF VISION.



BUT HERE, EVERYONE EATS WHILE WATCHING TV.

BUT NOT IN A POT! WHAT KIND OF MANNERS ARE THESE?

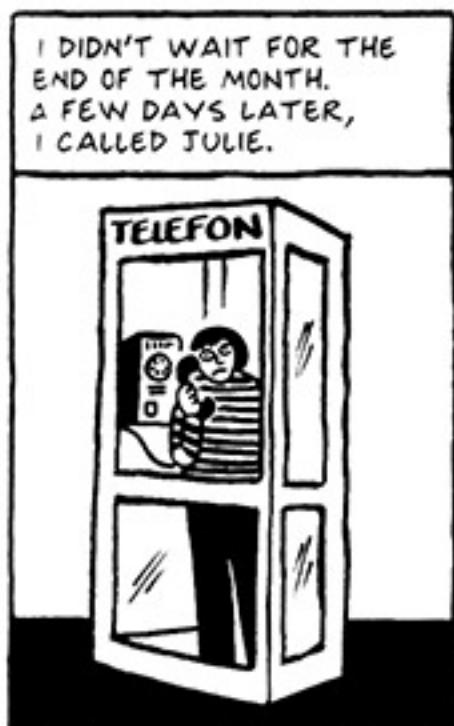


IT'S TRUE WHAT THEY SAY ABOUT YOU, TOO. YOU WERE ALL PROSTITUTES BEFORE BECOMING NUNS!



THE MOTHER SUPERIOR NO LONGER WANTED TO SEE ME, SO I WAS CALLED BEFORE HER ASSISTANT.







THE PILL

MY NEW HOME WAS A LOT MORE COMFORTABLE THAN THE BOARDING HOUSE. I SHARED JULIE'S ROOM.



WOULD YOU BELIEVE I HAVE A DATE WITH ERNST, THE OWNER OF CAFÉ SCHELTER.

THE OWNER?





JULIE AND I DISCUSSED A LOT BEFORE BED.

I THINK YOUR MOTHER IS
VERY NICE.

SHE CAN BE REALLY UNBEAR-
ABLE WHEN SHE WANTS TO BE.



BUT SHE REALLY LIKES YOU, TOO. THANKS TO
YOU, SHE GOES EASIER ON ME. SHE THINKS
THAT YOU'RE A GOOD INFLUENCE ON ME.

WHAT KIND OF GOOD INFLUENCE?



OH, YOU'RE THE PURE, TIMID,
INNOCENT VIRGIN WHO DOES
HER HOMEWORK. I'M NOT LIKE
THAT. I'VE BEEN HAVING SEX
FOR FIVE YEARS.

I'VE ALREADY SLEPT WITH
EIGHTEEN GUYS: FABRICE,
OLIVIER, LAURENT, LUC,
JEAN-MARC, ANOTHER
LAURENT, SEBASTIEN, . . .

AT FIRST WE USED
CONDOMS, BUT THE GUY
FEELS LESS.

"FEELS LESS" WHAT?



WELL, THE VAGINA!

THE VVV . . . ??!!



NOW I'M ON THE PILL.
THAT'S WHY I HAVE
SUCH A BIG BUTT.



I HAD A BIG BEHIND TOO, AND
I WASN'T EVEN TAKING
CONTRACEPTIVES.







AND THE PARTY WAS NOT WHAT I IMAGINED. IN IRAN, AT PARTIES, EVERYONE WOULD DANCE AND EAT. IN VIENNA, PEOPLE PREFERRED TO LIE AROUND AND SMOKE.



AND THEN, I WAS TURNED OFF BY ALL THESE PUBLIC DISPLAYS OF AFFECTION. WHAT DO YOU EXPECT, I CAME FROM A TRADITIONALIST COUNTRY.

AROUND FOUR IN THE MORNING, THE LAST GUESTS FINALLY LEFT. I WAS SO SLEEPY.



I RUSHED TO THE LIVING ROOM TO PROTECT MYSELF FROM I DON'T KNOW WHAT, BEHIND MY BEST FRIEND, A BOOK.



IT GOES WITHOUT SAYING THAT
I DIDN'T UNDERSTAND A WORD I
READ.



SEVERAL MINUTES LATER, I MADE OUT IN THE DARK THE SILHOUETTE OF A NAKED MAN,



FOLLOWED BY ONE OF A NAKED WOMAN,



THEN A MAN AND WOMAN HALF-NAKED!



I COULDN'T BELIEVE MY EYES...







THE VEGETABLE

MY MENTAL TRANSFORMATION WAS FOLLOWED BY MY PHYSICAL METAMORPHOSIS.

BETWEEN THE AGES OF FIFTEEN AND SIXTEEN, I GREW SEVEN INCHES. IT WAS IMPRESSIVE.



ME AT FIFTEEN

MY HEAD ALSO CHANGED IN ITS OWN WAY. FIRST, MY FACE GOT LONGER.

THEN MY RIGHT EYE GREW,

FOLLOWED SWIFTLY BY MY CHIN WHICH DOUBLED IN LENGTH.

THEN IT WAS MY MOUTH,



MY RIGHT HAND,



MY LEFT FOOT.



(EVEN TODAY, IT'S HALF A SIZE BIGGER THAN MY RIGHT FOOT.)

OF COURSE MY NOSE TRIPLED ITS SIZE.



AND WAS DECORATED BY A LARGE BEAUTY MARK.



WHICH I THOUGHT HIDEOUS AT THE TIME.

THEN MY CHIN ADVANCED MATESTICALLY,



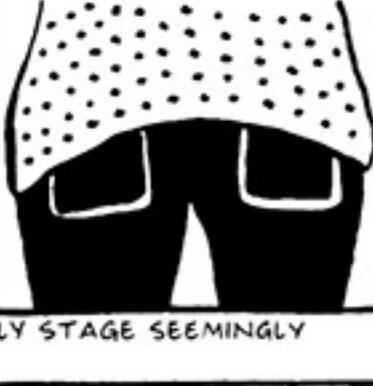
ONLY TO RETREAT TO ITS ORIGINAL POSITION SEVERAL MONTHS LATER.



FINALLY MY CHEST DEVELOPED



AND MY CENTER OF GRAVITY WAS BALANCED OUT BY THE POUNDS ON MY BUTT.



IN SHORT, I WAS IN AN UGLY STAGE SEEMINGLY WITHOUT END.

AS IF MY NATURAL DEFORMITY WASN'T ENOUGH, I TRIED A FEW NEW HAIRCUTS. A LITTLE SNIP OF THE SCISSORS ON THE LEFT.



AND A WEEK LATER, A LITTLE SNIP OF THE SCISSORS ON THE RIGHT.



I LOOKED LIKE COSETTE IN "LES MISÉRABLES."



SO I COATED MY HAIR WITH GEL,



I ADDED A THICK LINE OF EYELINER,



A FEW SAFETY PINS,



WHICH WERE REPLACED BY A SCARF. IT SOFTENED THE LOOK.



IT WAS BEGINNING TO LOOK LIKE SOMETHING.

HAVE YOU SEEN HOW BEAUTIFUL SHE IS NOW?



TO MY ENORMOUS SURPRISE, MY NEW LOOK EVEN PLEASED THE HALL MONITORS. IT SHOULD BE SAID THAT THEY WERE VERY YOUNG.

YOU CHANGE YOUR HAIRSTYLE EVERY DAY. WHO CUTS YOUR HAIR?

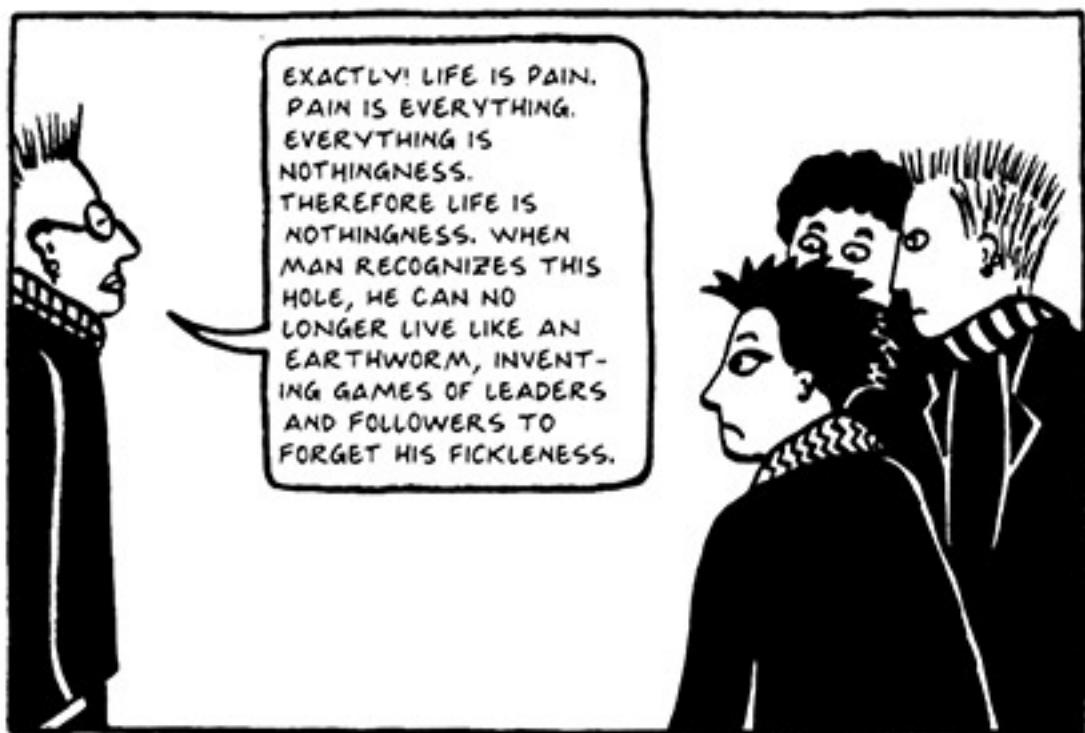
IF I PAY YOU, WILL YOU CUT MY HAIR, TOO?



THAT'S HOW I BECAME THE SCHOOL'S OFFICIAL HAIRCUTTER.



IT HELPED ME EARN A LITTLE SPENDING MONEY.



IT WAS ALWAYS THIERRY WHO ROLLED THE JOINTS WHILE WE KEPT AN EYE OUT FOR THE MONITORS SO WE WOULDN'T BE CAUGHT BY SURPRISE.



HERE!



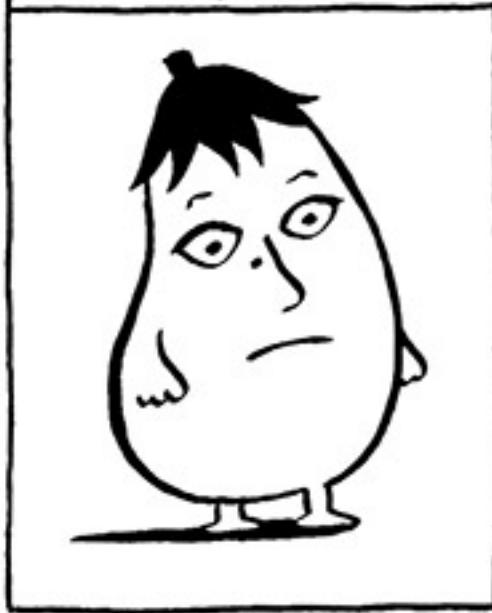
EACH TIME I WAS OFFERED A JOINT, I REMEMBERED THIS CONVERSATION MY PARENTS HAD ABOUT MY COUSIN KAMRAN.

POOR BOY, HE'S STUCK HIMSELF SO MANY TIMES HE'S BEGUN TO LOOK LIKE A VEGETABLE.

THIS KIND OF THING ALWAYS HAPPENS TO THE MOST FRAGILE ONES.



BECOMING A VEGETABLE WAS OUT OF THE QUESTION.



SO I PRETENDED TO PARTICIPATE, BUT I NEVER INHALED THE SMOKE.



AND AS SOON AS MY FRIENDS' BACKS WERE TURNED, I STUCK MY FINGERS IN MY EYES TO MAKE THEM GOOD AND RED.



THEN, I IMITATED THEIR LAUGHTER.



I WAS QUITE BELIEVABLE.

THE HARDER I TRIED TO ASSIMILATE, THE MORE I HAD THE FEELING THAT I WAS DISTANCING MYSELF FROM MY CULTURE, BETRAYING MY PARENTS AND MY ORIGINS, THAT I WAS PLAYING A GAME BY SOMEBODY ELSE'S RULES.



EACH TELEPHONE CALL FROM MY PARENTS REMINDED ME OF MY COWARDICE AND MY BETRAYAL. I WAS AT ONCE HAPPY TO HEAR THEIR VOICES AND ASHAMED TO TALK TO THEM.

- YES, I'M DOING FINE. I'M GETTING GOOD GRADES.
- FRIENDS? OF COURSE, LOTS!
- DAD...
- DAD, I LOVE YOU!

- YOU HAVE SOME GOOD FRIENDS?
- THAT DOESN'T SURPRISE ME, YOU ALWAYS HAD A TALENT FOR COMMUNICATING WITH PEOPLE!
- EAT ORANGES. THEY'RE FULL OF VITAMIN C.
- US TOO, WE ADORE YOU. YOU'RE THE CHILD ALL PARENTS DREAM OF HAVING!



IF ONLY THEY KNEW... IF THEY KNEW THAT THEIR DAUGHTER WAS MADE UP LIKE A PUNK, THAT SHE SMOKED JOINTS TO MAKE A GOOD IMPRESSION, THAT SHE HAD SEEN MEN IN THEIR UNDERWEAR WHILE THEY WERE BEING BOMBED EVERY DAY, THEY WOULDN'T CALL ME THEIR DREAM CHILD.

I FELT SO GUILTY THAT WHENEVER THERE WAS NEWS ABOUT IRAN, I CHANGED THE CHANNEL.



IT WAS TOO UNBEARABLE.



DID YOU WATCH TV YESTERDAY? YOU MUST BE WORRIED.

NO, IT'S OKAY! I TALKED TO MY PARENTS. THEY'RE FINE.

I WAS LYING. I KNEW NOTHING AND I DIDN'T WANT TO KNOW MORE.

I WANTED TO FORGET EVERYTHING, TO MAKE MY PAST DISAPPEAR, BUT MY UNCONSCIOUS CAUGHT UP WITH ME.





UNFORTUNATELY, IT ALL CAME OUT IN THE END. A FEW DAYS LATER IN A CAFÉ NEAR SCHOOL.

SHE TOLD MY BROTHER THAT SHE WAS FRENCH.

AND YOUR BROTHER BELIEVED HER?



WHAT DO YOU THINK? HAVE YOU HEARD THE WAY SHE TALKS?

HAVE YOU SEEN HER FACE?



BUT YOUR BROTHER WAS HITTING ON HER OR WHAT?

OF COURSE NOT!!

AH, THAT'S A RELIEF. CONSIDERING HOW UGLY SHE IS, IT WOULD BE REALLY UNFAIR IF SHE GOT A GUY LIKE MARC.



HA, HA, HA! I WOULD COMMIT SUICIDE IF MY BROTHER WAS GOING OUT WITH A COW LIKE THAT!



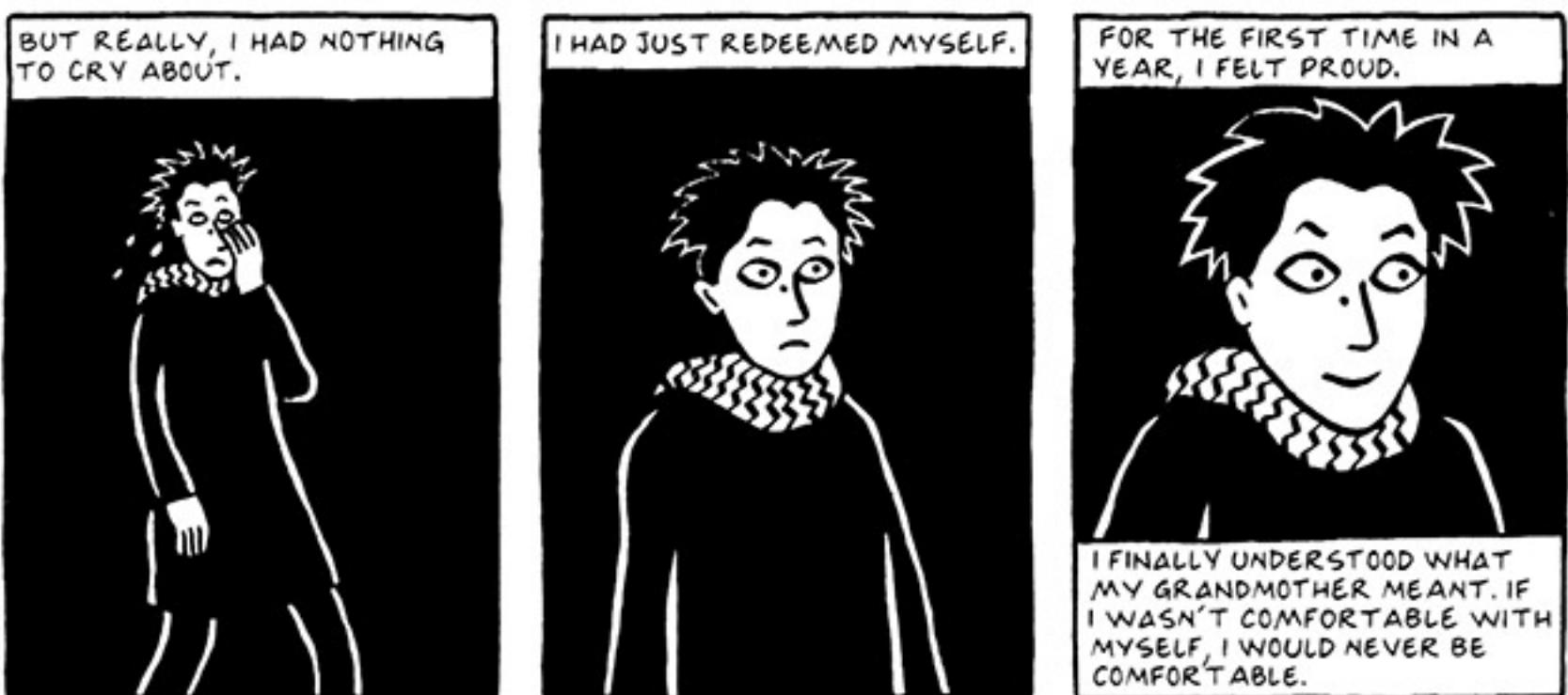
I DON'T KNOW IF YOU'VE NOTICED, BUT SHE NEVER TALKS ABOUT EITHER HER COUNTRY OR HER PARENTS.

WELL, OF COURSE! SHE LIES WHEN SHE SAYS THAT SHE'S KNOWN WAR. IT'S ALL TO MAKE HERSELF SEEM INTERESTING.



ANYWAY, HER PARENTS CLEARLY DON'T CARE ABOUT HER, OR THEY WOULDN'T HAVE SENT HER ALONE.

THAT WAS TOO MUCH, I SAW RED.





THE HORSE

JULIE AND HER MOTHER HAD LEFT VIENNA. NOW I WAS LIVING IN A WOHNGEMEINSCHAFT. THE WOHNGEMEINSCHAFT IS A COMMUNAL APARTMENT. I COULD STAY FOR FOUR MONTHS.

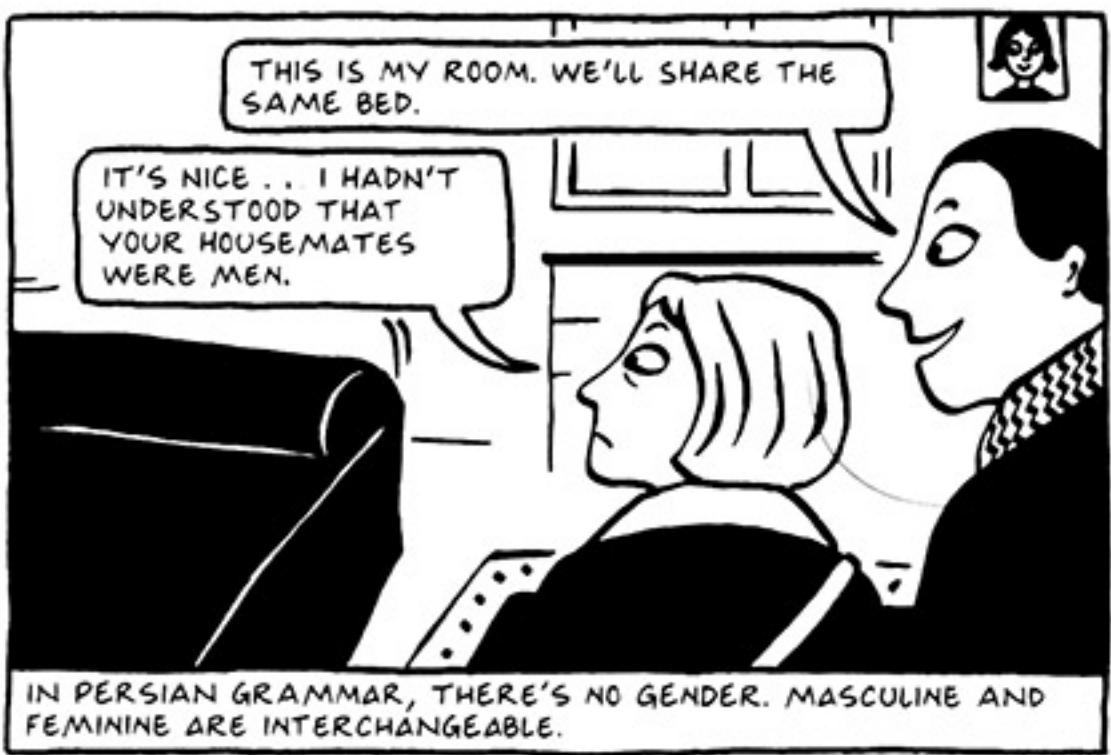


IT WAS FULL OF LIGHT. I HAD A DOUBLE-BED, A BUREAU, AND A DESK. FOR THE FIRST TIME IN A LONG TIME I HAD MY OWN SPACE.









RECOUNTING NINETEEN MONTHS IN A FEW DAYS ISN'T EASY. WE HAD TO TALK A LOT TO MAKE UP FOR LOST TIME. OUR CONVERSATIONS WERE ALWAYS DISJOINTED.

TELL ME, HOW'S DAD? WHAT'S HE DOING?

OH, HE TAKES CARE OF THE GAS IN TEHRAN'S BUILDINGS.

IT FRUSTRATES HIM A LITTLE. YOU KNOW, YOUR FATHER SPECIALIZED IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF STEEL FACTORIES, BUT DURING WARTIME THERE'S NO POINT IN BUILDING.

IS HE HAPPY ANYWAY?

YES, HE'S OKAY. HE MISSES YOU ENORMOUSLY, BUT HE'S HAPPY THAT YOU'RE LIVING HERE, FAR FROM THE PROBLEMS.

MOM, WHERE'S YOUR NECKLACE?

MY MOTHER ALWAYS WORE A GOLDEN PENDANT THAT DAD HAD GIVEN HER FOR THEIR TENTH WEDDING ANNIVERSARY.

I LEFT IT IN IRAN. YOU SEE, WE DON'T HAVE THE RIGHT TO TAKE ANYTHING OF VALUE OUT OF THE COUNTRY.

I LEARNED LATER THAT SHE HAD LIED TO ME.

YOU DON'T LIKE WHAT I MADE?

NO, NO, I LOVE IT. I'M JUST NOT VERY HUNGRY.

HERE - A LETTER FROM YOUR FATHER. I'M NOT THE ONE WHO OPENED IT, IT'S THE CUSTOMS IN TEHRAN. THEY CHECK EVERYTHING!

IN THE LETTER, HE WAS OVERJOYED BY THE THOUGHT THAT I HAD A PEACEFUL LIFE IN VIENNA.

IF YOU ONLY KNEW...

THERE AGAIN, SHE WAS LYING. AFTER THIS DAY, SHE NEVER AGAIN LET ME DO THE COOKING.

I HAD THE IMPRESSION THAT HE DIDN'T REALIZE WHAT I WAS ENDURING.







* SHE'S SO FAT!



I SPENT TWENTY-SEVEN DAYS BY HER SIDE. I TASTED THE HEAVENLY FOOD OF MY COUNTRY, PREPARED BY MY MOTHER. IT WAS A CHANGE FROM PASTA.



SHE STROKED MY HAIR EVERY NIGHT TO PUT ME TO SLEEP.



IT RELAXED ME TO TALK TO HER. IT HAD BEEN SO LONG SINCE I'D BEEN ABLE TO TALK TO SOMEONE WITHOUT HAVING TO EXPLAIN MY CULTURE.



THE EVE OF HER DEPARTURE.

MY DEAR, YOU WON'T INSULT DR. HELLER, RIGHT?

I PROMISE.



BUY YOURSELF FRUITS AND VEGETABLES. YOU MUST EAT WELL. IT'S NOT FOR NOTHING THAT WE SAY "A HEALTHY MIND IN A HEALTHY BODY!"

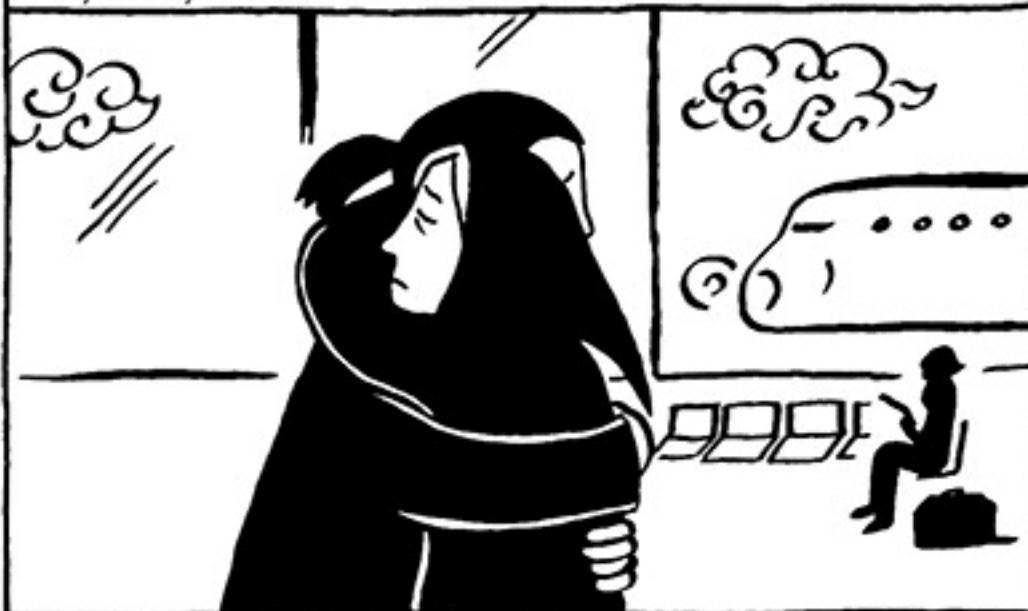


LOOK! I MADE SOME SKETCHES INSPIRED BY OUR WINDOW-SHOPPING. I'LL MAKE YOU SOME OUTFITS. YOU'RE IN NEED OF SOME NEW ONES.



EVER SINCE MY ARRIVAL IN AUSTRIA, I HADN'T BOUGHT MYSELF ANYTHING AND, GIVEN MY GROWTH SPURT, MY CLOTHES NO LONGER FIT ME.

THEN CAME THE DREADED DAY OF DEPARTURE. I WAS SAD BUT, WELL, I'D BEGUN TO GET USED TO SEPARATIONS.



MY MOTHER LEFT.

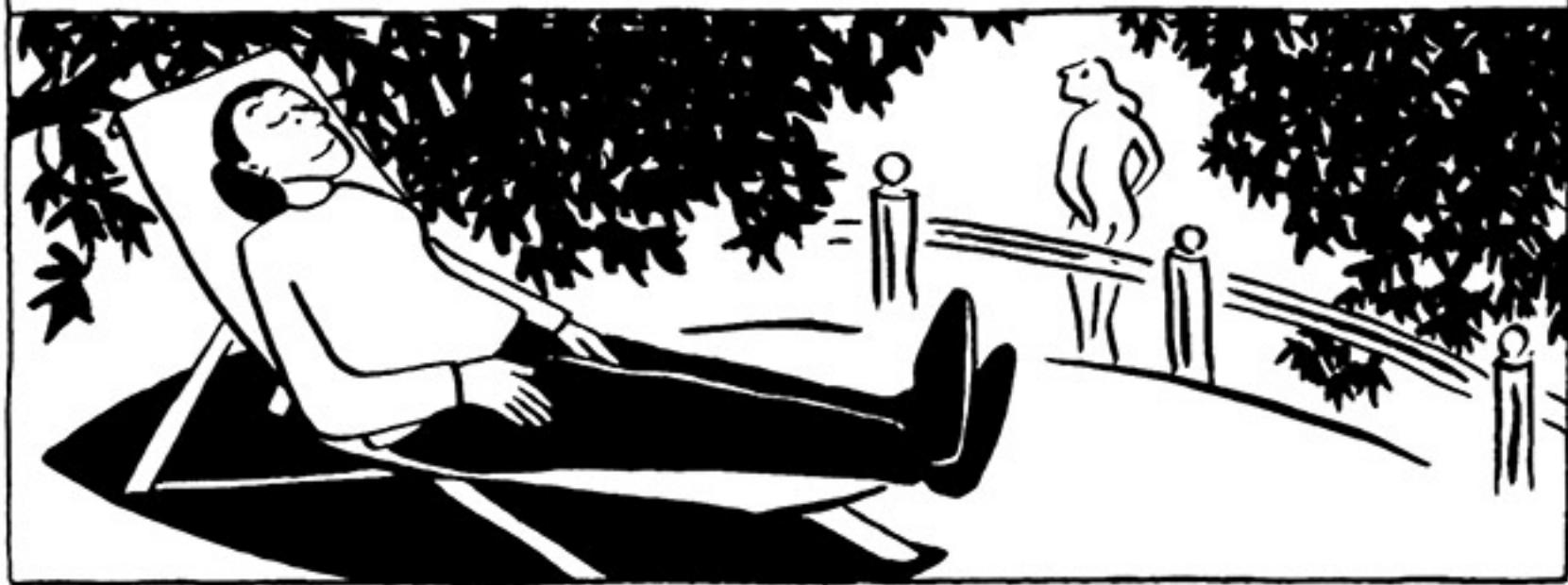


I'M SURE THAT SHE UNDERSTOOD THE MISERY OF MY ISOLATION EVEN IF SHE KEPT A STRAIGHT FACE AND GAVE NOTHING AWAY. SHE LEFT ME WITH A BAG OF AFFECTION THAT SUSTAINED ME FOR SEVERAL MONTHS.



HIDE AND SEEK

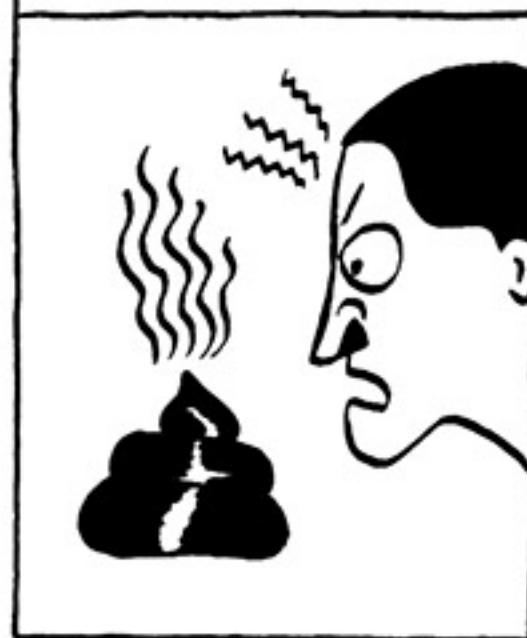
FRAU DOCTOR HELLER'S HOUSE WAS AN OLD VILLA, BUILT BY HER FATHER, A 1930S SCULPTOR OF SOME RENOWN. THE BIG TERRACE THAT LOOKED OUT ON THE GARDEN WAS MY FAVORITE PLACE. I SPENT SOME VERY PLEASANT MOMENTS THERE.



ONLY THE EXCREMENT OF VICTOR, FRAU DOCTOR HELLER'S DOG, DISTURBED THIS HARMONY.



ON AVERAGE, HE DEFECATED ONCE A WEEK ON MY BED.



DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEA? IT'S THE FIFTH TIME IN A MONTH! IT'S UNACCEPTABLE! WHY DON'T YOU TRAIN HIM?

YES, WELL! I'M GOING TO HAVE THE SHEETS CHANGED.



I OFTEN FORGOT THAT HE WAS TOO OLD TO LEARN ANYTHING.

YOU ARE REALLY VERY UPTIGHT!



ALL MY FRIENDS HAD LEFT OUR SCHOOL. JULIE WAS IN SPAIN, THIERRY AND OLIVIER HAD GONE BACK TO SWITZERLAND AND MOMO HAD BEEN EXPELLED. I WAS ALONE AT SCHOOL, BUT I DIDN'T CARE.



MY LACK OF INTEREST IN OTHERS MADE ME MORE INTERESTING.

HOW'S IT GOING, MARJANE?



EVER SINCE I'D SEEN MY MOTHER, I DIDN'T NEED ANYONE.

WELL, ALMOST.

DO YOU WANT TO WALK HOME TOGETHER?

NO. MY BOYFRIEND'S COMING TO GET ME.



HIS NAME WAS ENRIQUE. I'D MET HIM THROUGH DIETER, ONE OF MY FORMER HOUSEMATES.



ENRIQUE WAS HALF-AUSTRIAN, HALF-SPANISH.



ENRIQUE WAS TWENTY AND PLAYED THE PIANO.

I LIKED HIM A LOT.

THERE'LL BE ABOUT TWENTY OF US, IT'LL BE COOL.

DO YOU KNOW ALL OF THEM?

YES.

LEARNING THAT HE KNEW REAL ANARCHISTS ONLY INTENSIFIED MY FEELINGS FOR HIM.

"A REVOLUTIONARY ANARCHISTS' PARTY!" IT REMINDED ME OF THE COMMITMENT AND THE BATTLES OF MY CHILDHOOD IN IRAN. EVEN BETTER, IT WOULD PERHAPS ALLOW ME TO BETTER UNDERSTAND BAKUNIN.



FINALLY THE BIG DAY ARRIVED.



AFTER AN HOUR AND A HALF ON THE ROAD, WE ARRIVED IN THE MIDDLE OF THE FOREST.



IN THE DISTANCE I SAW A GROUP OF ADULTS CHASING ONE ANOTHER AND SHOUTING:

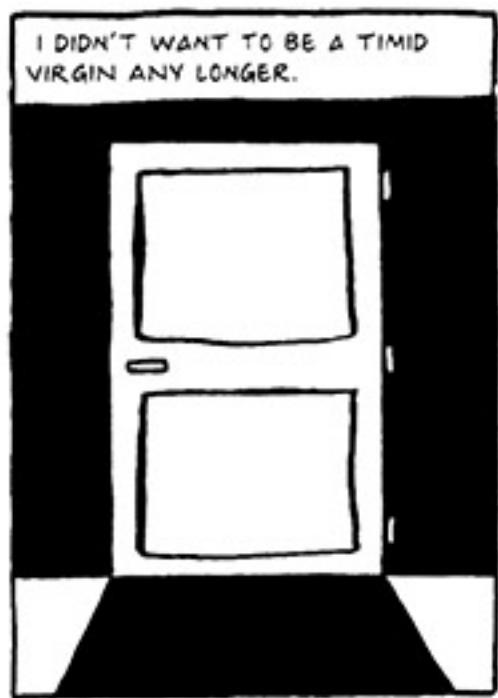


WHAT A DISAPPOINTMENT... MY ENTHUSIASM WAS QUICKLY REPLACED BY A FEELING OF DISGUST AND PROFOUND CONTEMPT.





IT EMBARRASSED ME TO SLEEP WITH ENRIQUE IN FRONT OF ALL THESE PEOPLE. I CAME FROM A CULTURE WHERE EVEN KISSING IN PUBLIC WAS CONSIDERED A SEXUAL ACT.







I LOST TOUCH WITH ENRIQUE BUT HIS ANARCHIST FRIENDS ADOPTED ME. MY LIFE WAS SPLIT BETWEEN THEM, MY SCHOOL, AND FRAU DOCTOR HELLER'S HOUSE.



THE COMMUNAL LIFE WENT HAND IN HAND WITH THE USE OF ALL KINDS OF MOOD ENHANCERS: WEED, HASH, ...



I TRIPPED EVERY WEEKEND, AND YOU COULD SEE IT ON MY FACE.

MY PHYSICS TEACHER, YONNEL ARROUAS, WAS WORRIED ABOUT ME.



AT HOME, THERE'S A WAR. I'M SCARED FOR MY PARENTS. I'M ALONE AND I FEEL GUILTY. I DON'T HAVE MUCH MONEY. MY UNCLE WAS ASSASSINATED. I SAW MY NEIGHBOR DIE IN A BOMBING...



I PERSISTED ANYWAY. I NEEDED TO TALK SO MUCH.

THEN, I LIVE IN THIS CRAZY WOMAN'S HOUSE, MY BOYFRIEND...

ENOUGH, IT'S OKAY. WOULD YOU LIKE TO COME OVER FOR LUNCH AT OUR HOUSE ON SATURDAY? MY MOTHER WILL BE THERE, TOO.



AT HIS HOUSE, I PLAYED WITH HIS TWINS, JOHANNA AND CAROLINE.



I SPENT A LONG TIME TALKING TO MRS. ARROUAS, MY TEACHER'S MOTHER, A FRENCHWOMAN OF JEWISH-MOROCCAN ORIGINS.

I UNDERSTAND HOW HARD IT IS FOR YOU. YOU HAVE TO MAKE THREE TIMES THE EFFORT OF ANYONE ELSE TO SUCCEED! THAT'S THE IMMIGRANT LOT! IT WAS THE SAME FOR ME, WHEN I ARRIVED IN FRANCE.







THE FOLLOWING WEEKEND, I WAS BACK AT THE COMMUNE.

WHERE WERE YOU THE PAST TWO WEEKS?
WHY DIDN'T YOU COME SEE US?

ONE OF
MY
TEACH-
ERS
INVITED
ME
OVER,
AND
LAST
WEEK I
SAW A
FRIEND.



INGRID, MY FORMER ENEMY, HAD NOW BECOME A GREAT FRIEND. SHE TAUGHT ME TRANSCENDENTAL MEDITATION. WITH HER, I SPENT MY TIME EITHER MEDITATING,



OR TRIPPING.



I DIDN'T ALWAYS LIKE IT, BUT I BY FAR PREFERRED BORING MYSELF WITH HER TO HAVING TO CONFRONT MY SOLITUDE AND MY DISAPPOINTMENTS.



I FINALLY HAD A REAL BOYFRIEND. I WAS OVER THE MOON. ONE NIGHT AT MARKUS' HOUSE,

I'M GOING TO WRITE A PLAY.

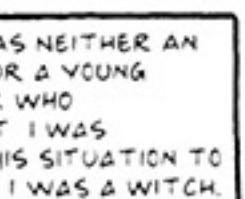
OH YEAH, I'D LOVE TO BE IN IT.



WHEN SUDENLY,

WAS MACHT SIE HIER?
SIE MÜS RAUS GEHEN!

IT WAS HIS MOTHER. MARKUS DIDN'T HAVE A FATHER. SHE THOUGHT I DIDN'T UNDERSTAND GERMAN. SHE WAS SAYING THAT I HAD TO GO "RAUS," OUTSIDE.



I'D ALREADY HEARD THIS THREATENING WORD YELLED AT ME IN THE METRO.

DU SCHEISS AUSLÄNDERIN,
GEH RAUS!

IT WAS AN OLD MAN WHO SAID "DIRTY FOREIGNER, GET OUT!" I HAD HEARD IT ANOTHER TIME IN THE STREET. BUT I TRIED TO MAKE LIGHT OF IT. I THOUGHT THAT IT WAS JUST THE REACTION OF A NASTY OLD MAN.



BUT THIS, THIS WAS DIFFERENT. IT WAS NEITHER AN OLD MAN DESTROYED BY THE WAR, NOR A YOUNG IDIOT. IT WAS MY BOYFRIEND'S MOTHER WHO ATTACKED ME. SHE WAS SAYING THAT I WAS TAKING ADVANTAGE OF MARKUS AND HIS SITUATION TO OBTAIN AN AUSTRIAN PASSPORT, THAT I WAS A WITCH.



I THINK SHE'D NEVER LOOKED AT HERSELF IN THE MIRROR.



SHE ORDERED ME TO LEAVE THEM ALONE, HER AND HER SON.

RAUS! ICH SAGE RAUS!!



THEN THREW ME OUT.

GO ON HOME. I'LL COME SEE YOU TOMORROW AT YOUR HOUSE.



MARKUS MUST HAVE BEEN SUFFERING MORE THAN I. HE HAD TO SACRIFICE HIS RELATIONSHIP WITH HIS MOTHER TO CONTINUE TO SEE ME. I DIDN'T WANT TO ADD TO IT. SO I SAID NOTHING ...



* THIS ISN'T A BORDELLO.



* I HAD JUST READ HIS THREE ESSAYS ON THE THEORY OF SEXUALITY.



THIS IS HOW, FOR LOVE, I BEGAN MY CAREER AS A DRUG DEALER. HADN'T I FOLLOWED MY MOTHER'S ADVICE? TO GIVE THE BEST OF MYSELF? I WAS NO LONGER A SIMPLE JUNKIE, BUT MY SCHOOL'S OFFICIAL DEALER.



THE CROISSANT

LUCKILY, I HAD BENEFITED ENOUGH FROM A SOLID EDUCATION TO NEVER DRIFT TOO FAR. IT WAS THE END OF MY LAST YEAR. I WAS GOING TO TAKE THE FRENCH BACCALAUREATE.



WHEN I STUDIED WITH THE OTHERS, I REALIZED THAT I HAD MANY GAPS. I NEEDED A MIRACLE TO PASS.

AND THIS MIRACLE HAPPENED ONE NIGHT IN JUNE, DURING MY SLEEP.



THE NEXT MORNING I CALLED MY MOTHER,



WHO CALLED GOD, WHO IN TURN SENT HIS MESSAGE TO THE EXAMINER.



EACH TIME THAT I ASKED MY MOTHER TO PRAY FOR ME, MY WISH WAS GRANTED.

DO YOU LIKE THE 18TH CENTURY?

YES.



DO YOU LIKE MONTESQUIEU?

YES.



YOU HAVE THIRTY MINUTES TO PREPARE "SLAVERY OF THE NEGROES."

I GOT A 17, THE BEST GRADE IN SCHOOL.

THEN CAME SUMMER. TO BE TRUTHFUL, I WASN'T MAKING ANYTHING BY DEALING BECAUSE I WAS DOING IT AS A FAVOR. SO I SET OUT TO FIND SOME ODD JOBS.



IT WAS SOMETIMES BORING.



SOMETIMES FUN.



ONE DAY I SAW AN AD IN A NEWSPAPER: "CAFÉ SOLE IS LOOKING FOR A WAITRESS, THREE EUROPEAN LANGUAGES REQUIRED."



YOU SPEAK GERMAN, ENGLISH AND FRENCH. THAT'S GOOD. HAVE YOU EVER WORKED IN A BAR?

YES*

GOOD! YOU START TOMORROW. BUT WATCH OUT! THE CUSTOMER IS ALWAYS RIGHT!!

* I LIED.

CAFÉ SOLE WAS LOCATED IN THE BEST NEIGHBORHOOD IN VIENNA. I WAS PAID DECENTLY, BUT IT WASN'T ALWAYS EASY WITH THE CUSTOMERS. SOMETIMES, I REALLY WANTED TO SLAP THEM.



NONETHLESS, I HAD AN ALLY. IT WAS SVETLANA, THE YUGOSLAVIAN CHEF.



TELL ME, WHAT DID HE ORDER, THIS SON-OF-A-BITCH?

A WIENER SCHNITZEL.



GOD FORGIVE ME!

RAAK PTOUH!

THERE! JUSTICE IS DONE.





ADMITTEDLY, I WASN'T SELLING DRUGS ANYMORE, BUT I HAD STARTED TAKING MORE AND MORE. AT FIRST, MARKUS WAS VERY IMPRESSED,

ANOTHER ONE?? YOU'RE TOO STRONG!



THEN, HE STARTED TO LECTURE ME,

IN THE NAME OF GOD! LOOK AT WHAT YOU'RE BECOMING.



AND FINALLY, HE DISTANCED HIMSELF.



THIS DECADENT SIDE, WHICH HAD SO PLEASED HIM AT FIRST, ENDED UP PROFOUNDLY ANNOYING HIM.

I SHOULD SAY THAT I WAS SMOKING TOO MANY JOINTS. I WAS CONSTANTLY TIRED AND I OFTEN FELL ASLEEP.

THE DEFINITE INTEGRAL OF FUNCTION F ON ...



WHAT DO YOU WANT ME TO SAY, SIR? THAT I'M THE VEGETABLE THAT I REFUSED TO BECOME?



THAT I'M SO DISAPPOINTED IN MYSELF THAT I CAN NO LONGER LOOK AT MYSELF IN THE MIRROR? THAT I HATE MYSELF?...



IT WAS 1988. MARKUS HAD STARTED STUDYING THEATER. I HAD REGISTERED AT THE FACULTY OF TECHNOLOGY, BUT I NEVER WENT.

THIS SAME YEAR, I BECAME AWARE THAT THE PRESIDENT OF AUSTRIA WAS NAMED KURT WALDHEIM.



THROUGH MARKUS, I HAD GOTTEN TO KNOW SOME OTHER STUDENTS. WE WOULD OFTEN GET TOGETHER AT THE CAFÉ HAWELKA, WHERE WE DISCUSSED POLITICS.



WE SHOULDN'T EXAGGERATE. WALDHEIM WAS ELECTED A YEAR AND A HALF AGO. IF THERE HAD BEEN ANY RADICAL CHANGES, WE WOULD HAVE KNOWN.

HOW CAN YOU SAY THAT? WE'VE GONE FROM SOCIALISM TO NAZISM.



PERSONALLY, I DIDN'T UNDERSTAND THIS DIFFERENCE. THE FIRST TIME I SAW SKINHEADS WAS IN 1984. AT THE TIME, I DIDN'T EVEN KNOW WHAT IT MEANT. AND I DIDN'T SPEAK MUCH GERMAN. SO I DIDN'T UNDERSTAND WHAT THEY WANTED WITH ME. I SENSED THAT THEY WERE HOSTILE, BUT HAVING GROWN UP WITH THE GUARDIANS OF THE REVOLUTION, I KNEW WHAT TO DO IN THIS KIND OF SITUATION...



I KEPT A LOW PROFILE.



SINCE THEN, I HADN'T NOTICED THEIR NUMBERS GROWING.

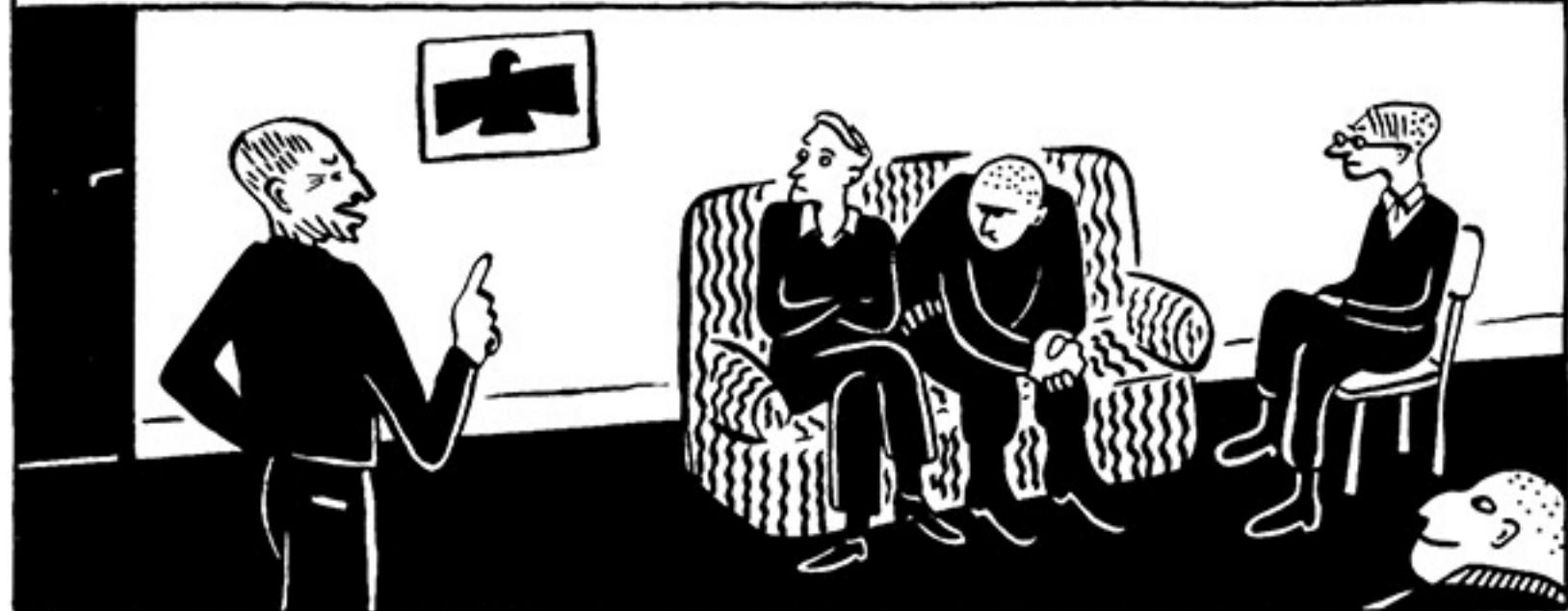
ASSHOLES, THEY'RE EVERYWHERE. YOU THINK THAT THERE AREN'T ANY WHERE I COME FROM? THEY'RE TEN TIMES MORE FEARSOME THAN YOURS. IN IRAN, THEY KILL THE PEOPLE WHO DON'T THINK LIKE THE LEADERS!



DURING THIS PERIOD, THE STUDENTS IN QUESTION, LIKE MOST YOUNG VIENNESE, WERE VERY POLITICIZED. THEY DEMONSTRATED EVERY SO OFTEN AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT IN POWER. SOMETIMES I JOINED THEM.



THEY SAID THAT THE OLD NAZIS HAD BEEN TEACHING "MEIN KAMPF" IN THEIR HOMES TO NEW NAZIS SINCE THE BEGINNING OF THE 80S, THAT SOON THERE WOULD BE A RISE IN THE EXTREME RIGHT THROUGHOUT EUROPE.



AS FOR MARKUS, HE NEVER PARTICIPATED IN ANYTHING. HE WAS WRITING HIS PLAY.

YOU'RE NOT COMING WITH US?

UHH, NO! I'M WORKING, I DON'T HAVE TIME.



AND ANYWAY, IT'S A WASTE OF TIME. WALDHEIM WAS DEMOCRATICALLY ELECTED. IT WAS THE WILL OF THE PEOPLE.

CLICK CLICK

AND YOUR CONSCIENCE? WHAT HAVE YOU DONE WITH YOUR CONSCIENCE?

I WRITE, CULTURE AND EDUCATION ARE THE LETHAL WEAPONS AGAINST ALL KINDS OF FUNDAMENTALISM. WE HAVE TO EDUCATE THE PEOPLE SO THAT THEY DON'T VOTE FOR NAZIS.



YEAH, THE INTELLECTUALS ARE TOO PRECIOUS TO WASTE THEIR TIME SHOUTING!

WHATEVER...



IN ANY CASE, IT'S THE COWARDICE OF PEOPLE LIKE YOU WHO GIVE DICTATORS THE CHANCE TO INSTALL THEMSELVES!



THESE ARGUMENTS MARKED THE BEGINNING OF THE END OF OUR STORY.

NEVERTHELESS HE, LIKE I, TRIED TO SAVE OUR RELATIONSHIP. WE HAD BEEN TOGETHER ALMOST TWO YEARS. THE NIGHT BEFORE MY BIRTHDAY,

I'VE BEEN INVITED TO GRAZ BY A FRIEND.

THAT'S GOOD.



IT DOESN'T BOTHER YOU THAT I WON'T BE CELEBRATING MY BIRTHDAY WITH YOU?

NO, NOT AT ALL.



IT'LL BE GOOD FOR YOU.

IT WAS GOOD TIMING AFTER ALL. MAYBE THIS VACATION WAS GOING TO SAVE OUR RELATIONSHIP.

YOU'RE GOING TO MISS ME, YOU'LL SEE...



GOOD, I'M GOING TO SLEEP AT YOUR HOUSE TONIGHT. MY TRAIN IS AT 7:30 TOMORROW.

WAIT, YOU'RE CLOSER TO THE STATION THAN I AM. IF YOU COME OVER, YOU'LL MISS YOUR TRAIN.



YES, YOU'RE RIGHT!

WHEN YOU GET BACK, WE'LL CELEBRATE TOGETHER.



SO I SLEPT AT MY HOUSE AND
THE NEXT MORNING . . .



... I MISSED MY TRAIN.



THIS MUST BE DESTINY'S SIGN
THAT I SHOULD CELEBRATE
TURNING EIGHTEEN WITH HIM.



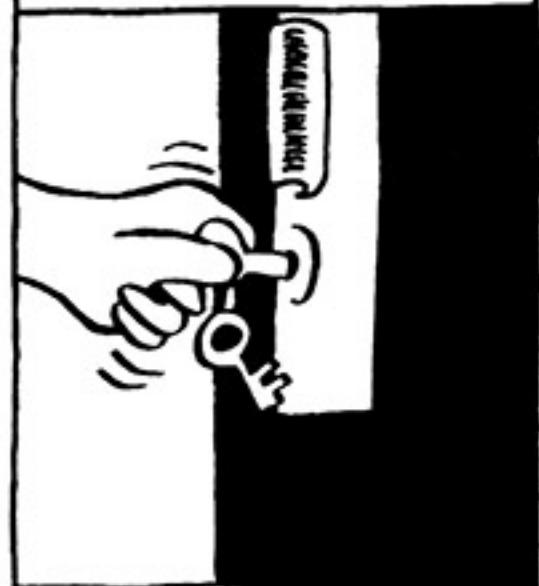
I HAD AN INGENIOUS IDEA: "I
AM GOING TO SURPRISE HIM
BY BRINGING HIM HOT
CROISSANTS."



OH YEAH,
I'M JUST TOO COOL!



I TURNED THE KEY IN THE
LOCK DELICATELY, NOT TO
WAKE HIM, TO BETTER
SURPRISE HIM.







THE VEIL

MY BREAKUP WITH MARKUS REPRESENTED MORE THAN A SIMPLE SEPARATION. I HAD JUST LOST MY ONE EMOTIONAL SUPPORT, THE ONLY PERSON WHO CARED FOR ME, AND TO WHOM I WAS ALSO WHOLLY ATTACHED.



I HAD NO FAMILY OR FRIENDS. I HAD COUNTED ON THIS RELATIONSHIP FOR EVERYTHING. THE WORLD HAD JUST CRUMBLED IN FRONT OF MY EYES.



LEAVE ME ALONE, PLEASE!

OH NO, YOU CAN'T GET AWAY WITH THIS.



GO TO HELL, LEAVE! I DETEST YOU, I HATE YOU!



EVERYTHING REMINDED ME OF MARKUS. THIS BEDSPREAD, IT WAS HIS BIRTHDAY PRESENT TO ME.



THIS POSTER, HE BOUGHT IT FOR ME AT THE PICASSO SHOW AT THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART.

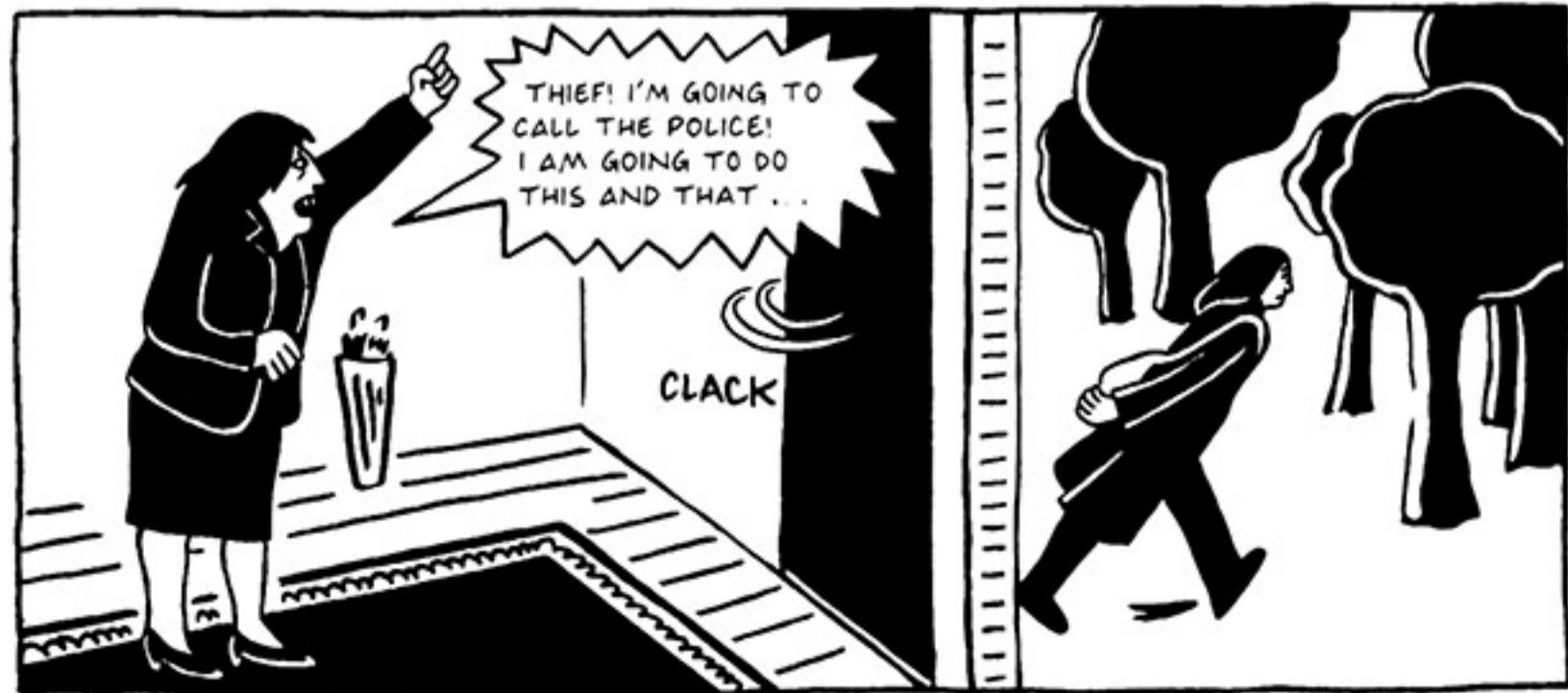


HIS T-SHIRT. OH, HIS T-SHIRT!



WHERE WAS MY MOTHER TO STROKE MY HAIR?





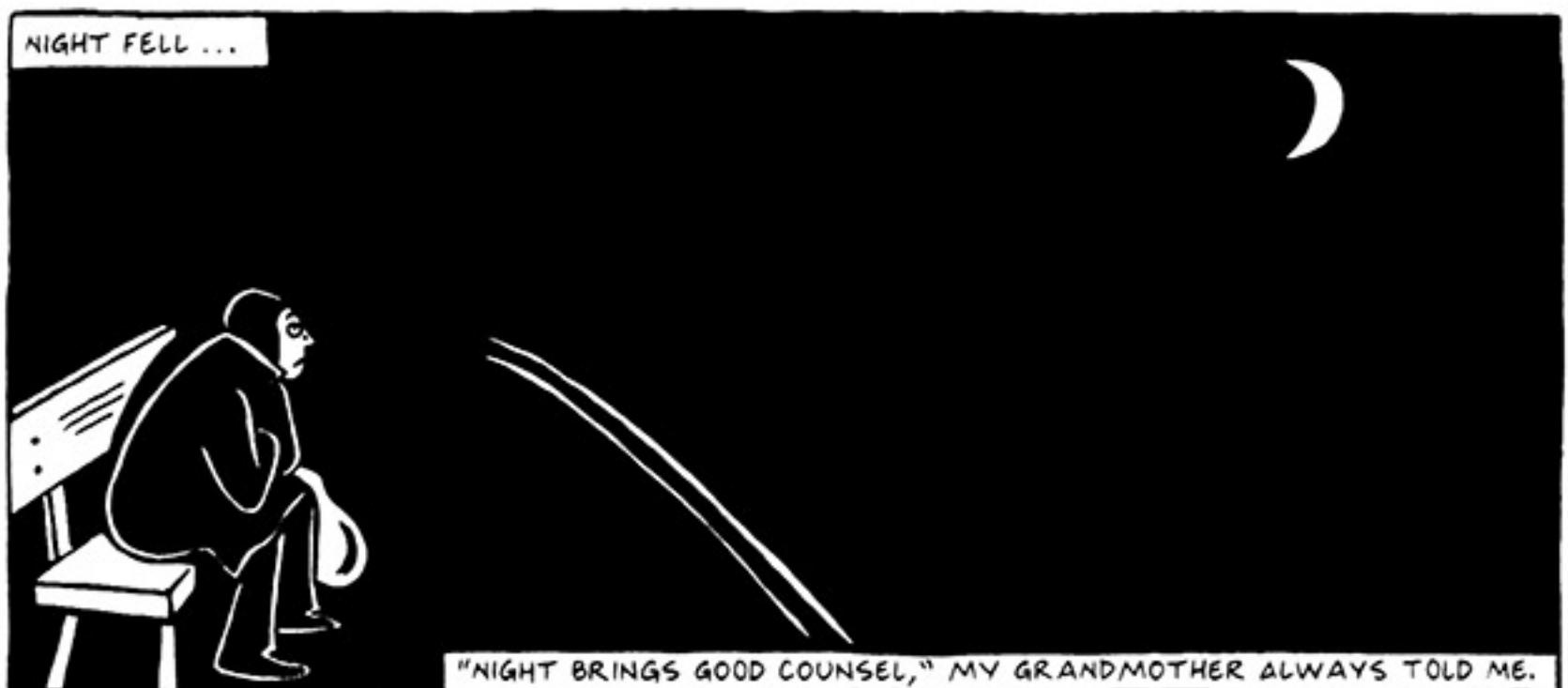
IT WAS NOVEMBER 22, MY BIRTHDAY. IT WAS BITTERLY COLD. I STAYED ON A BENCH, IMMOBILE ...
I WATCHED THE PEOPLE GOING TO WORK ...



... THEN COMING BACK ...



NIGHT FELL ...



"NIGHT BRINGS GOOD COUNSEL," MY GRANDMOTHER ALWAYS TOLD ME.





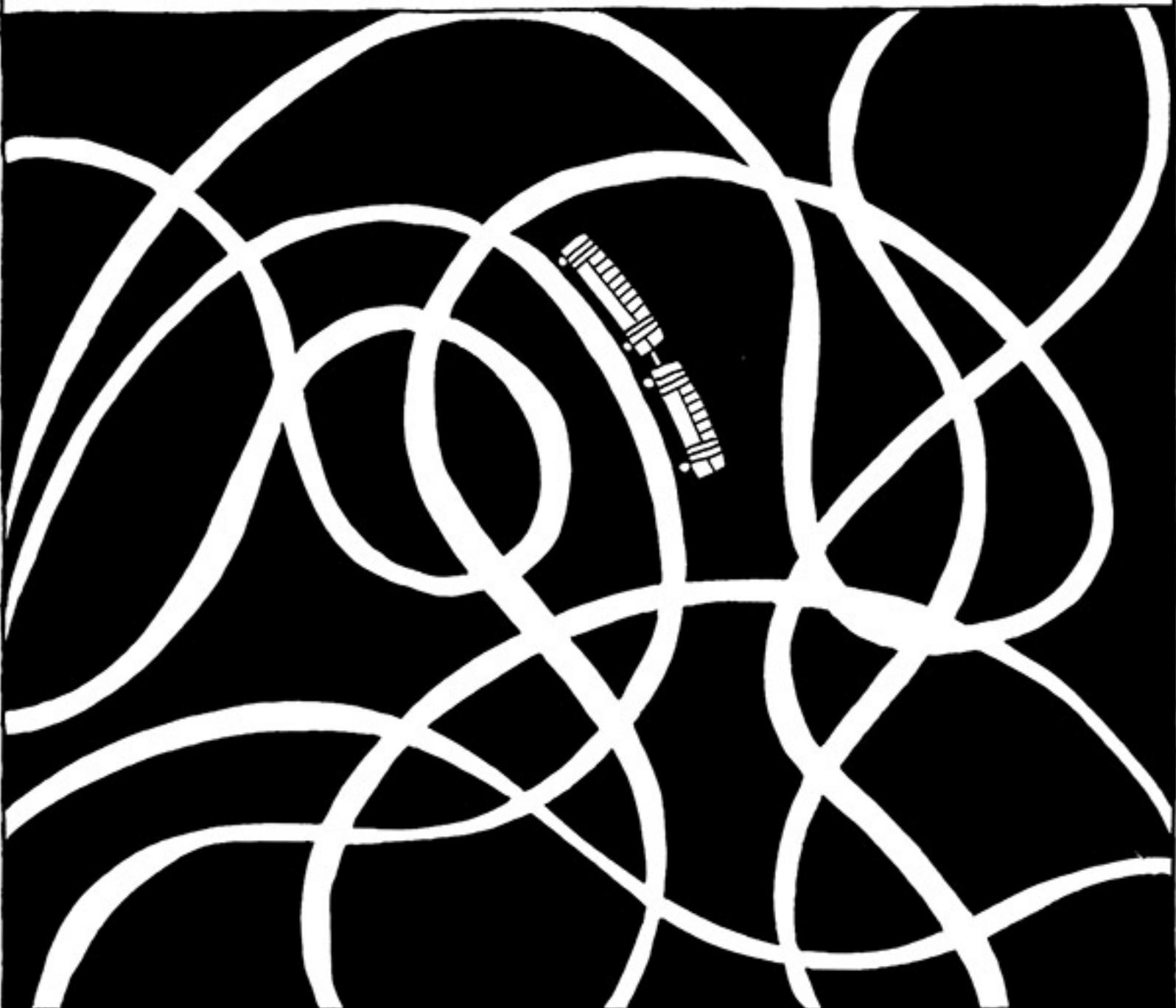
IN THE MORNING, I TOOK THE TRAM.



INSIDE, THERE WERE TWO SPOTS THAT WERE VERY WARM, BECAUSE THEY WERE ABOVE THE MOTOR. I FELL ASLEEP ON ONE OF THESE SEATS. IT WAS PEACEFUL.



FOR ALMOST A MONTH, I LIVED AT THIS RHYTHM: THE NIGHT PROSTRATE AND THE DAY LETTING MYSELF BE CARRIED ACROSS VIENNA BY SLEEP AND THE TRAMWAY.



VERY QUICKLY, MY SAVINGS VANISHED. I WAS BROKE.



IT'S INCREDIBLE HOW QUICKLY YOU CAN LOSE YOUR DIGNITY. I FOUND MYSELF SMOKING BUTTS,



LOOKING FOR FOOD IN TRASH CANS,



I, WHO BEFORE COULDN'T EVEN TASTE FROM OTHERS' PLATES.

SOON, I WAS RECOGNIZED AND THROWN OUT OF ALL THE TRAMS.



SO I HAD TO FIND A WELL-HIDDEN PLACE TO SLEEP AT NIGHT. NIGHTS ON THE STREET COULD END VERY BADLY FOR A YOUNG GIRL LIKE ME.



I DIDN'T HAVE ANYONE. MY ENTIRE EXISTENCE HAD BEEN PLANNED AROUND MARKUS. IT'S SURELY FOR THIS REASON THAT I FOUND MYSELF WANDERING LIKE THIS.

IT WAS UNTHINKABLE THAT I GO BACK TO SEE ZOZO.

I DON'T CARE. OUR APARTMENT IS TOO SMALL.



NOR INGRID.

YOU DROPPED US FOR A GUY WHO WASN'T EVEN WORTH IT.



AS FOR FRAU DOCTOR HELLER, LET'S NOT EVEN TALK ABOUT HER. SHE REPRESENTED ABSOLUTE EVIL IN MY EYES.



I SPENT MORE THAN TWO MONTHS ON THE STREET IN THE MIDDLE OF WINTER.

KOUMF
KOUMF



IT WAS VERY COLD.

ROUHF
KOF
KOF



I GOT SICK.

KEUH
KEUH



I STARTED TO COUGH A LITTLE,

RRRM
KREUH
KOF



THEN A LITTLE MORE,

MPF
KKOF
KOF



THEN A LITTLE MORE STRONGLY,

KROUMPF
KROUF



MY COUGH BECAME CONTINUOUS,

KRA
KRA



UNTIL I SPIT BLOOD,

KOF
REUH



AND ENDED UP . .

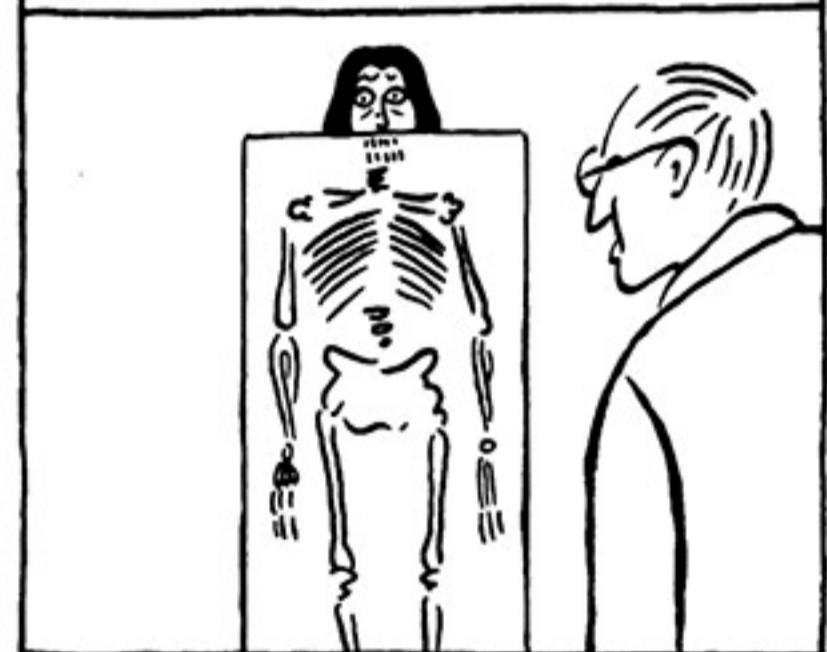


I WOKE UP IN A HOSPITAL. IT WAS A MIRACLE. IF I HAD FAINTED DURING THE NIGHT, NO ONE WOULD HAVE NOTICED AND THE GLACIAL COLD WOULD SURELY HAVE PREVENTED ME FROM FULFILLING MY DESTINY.



I HAD KNOWN A REVOLUTION THAT HAD MADE ME LOSE PART OF MY FAMILY.

I HAD SURVIVED A WAR THAT HAD DISTANCED ME FROM MY COUNTRY AND MY PARENTS ...



PEDAL AS FAST AS YOU CAN.

... AND IT'S A BANAL STORY OF LOVE THAT ALMOST CARRIED ME AWAY.









THE FIVE DAYS PASSED LIKE THE WIND AND THE CIGARETTES DIDN'T GET THE BETTER OF ME. I GOT DRESSED,



I PACKED MY BAG...



...I AGAIN PUT ON MY VEIL...



... AND SO MUCH FOR MY INDIVIDUAL AND SOCIAL LIBERTIES ...



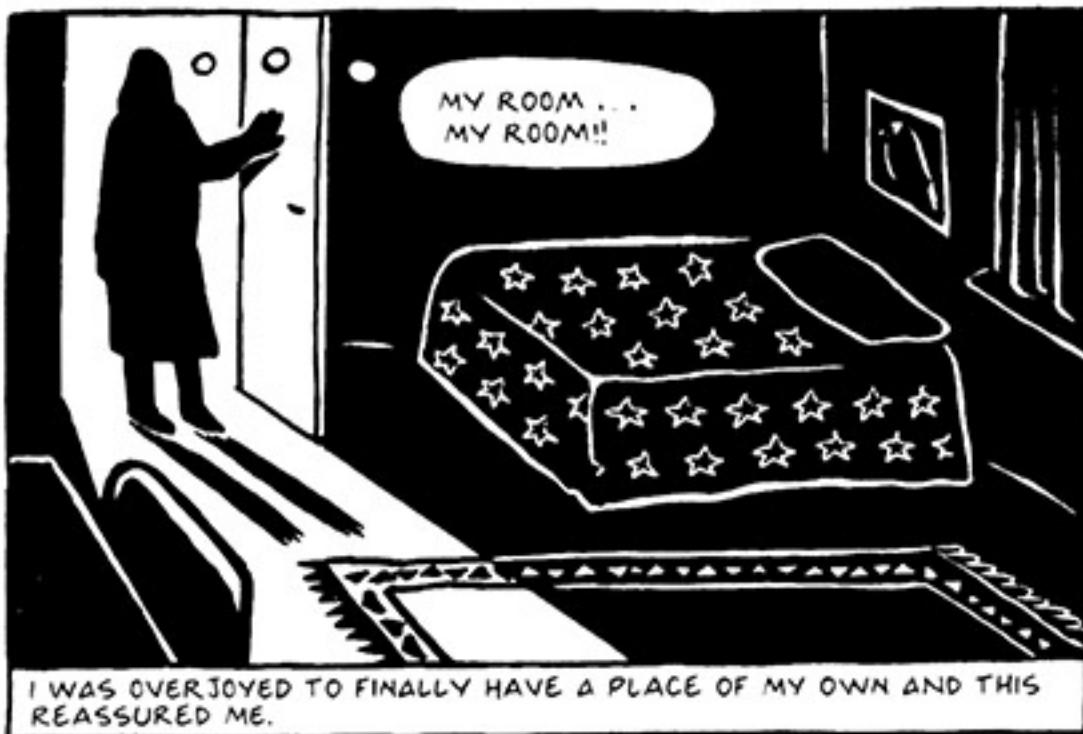
... I NEEDED SO BADLY TO GO HOME.



THE RETURN

AFTER FOUR YEARS LIVING IN VIENNA, HERE I AM BACK IN TEHRAN. FROM THE MOMENT I ARRIVED AT MEHRABAD AIRPORT AND CAUGHT SIGHT OF THE FIRST CUSTOMS AGENT, I IMMEDIATELY FELT THE REPRESSIVE AIR OF MY COUNTRY.







SO I WENT TO SEE MY MOTHER. SHE WOULD SURELY KNOW WHERE THEY WERE. MAYBE SHE EVEN LISTENED TO THEM TO REMEMBER ME.



DO YOU WANT SOME TEA? AN OMELET, SOME TOAST. .?



DO YOU REMEMBER FRAU DOCTOR KELLER'S DISGUSTING TEA?

HER NAME WAS HELLER! OF COURSE! HOW COULD I POSSIBLY FORGET THAT HORSE PISS?



AH, THERE'S NOTHING LIKE IRANIAN TEA!

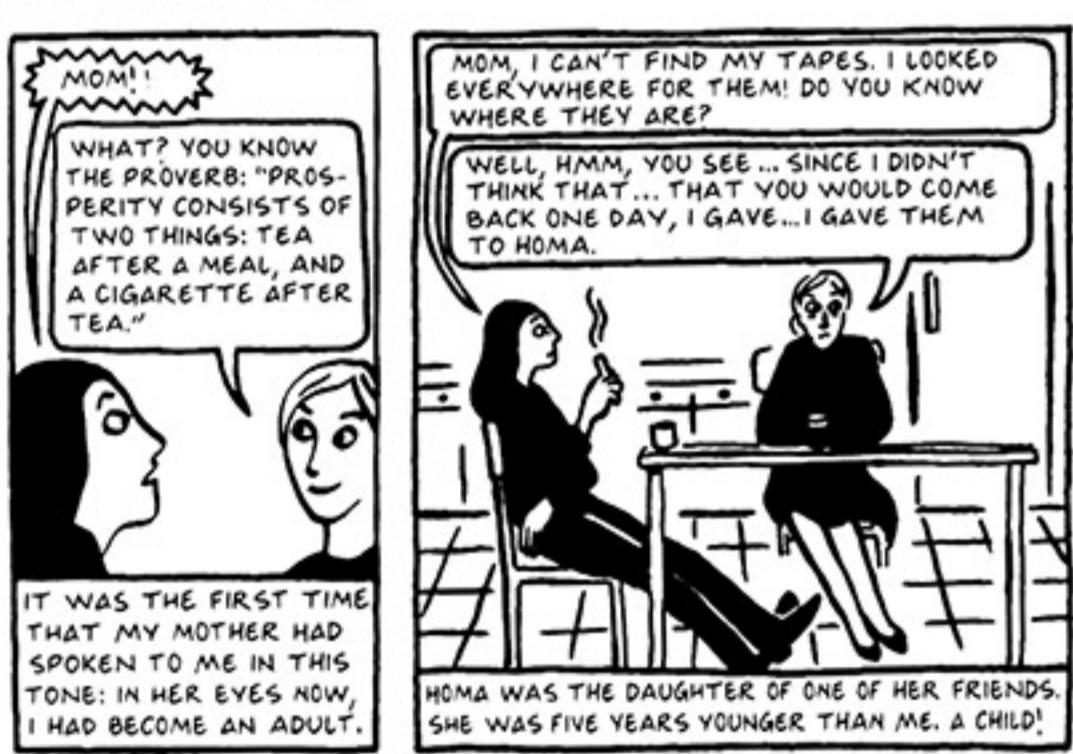
OH YES, ESPECIALLY WITH A CIGARETTE. DO YOU WANT ONE?



MOM!

WHAT? YOU KNOW THE PROVERB: "PROSPERITY CONSISTS OF TWO THINGS: TEA AFTER A MEAL, AND A CIGARETTE AFTER TEA."

IT WAS THE FIRST TIME THAT MY MOTHER HAD SPOKEN TO ME IN THIS TONE: IN HER EYES NOW, I HAD BECOME AN ADULT.



AFTER ALL, MOM HADN'T BEEN WRONG. IN ANY CASE, I NO LONGER LIKED THE IDOLS OF MY ADOLESCENCE.



YOU'RE RIGHT! I'M GOING TO BUY MYSELF SOME NEW ONES!

CAN YOU GIVE ME A SPONGE?

A SPONGE? OF COURSE, DARLING.



I DECIDED TO TAKE THIS LITTLE PROBLEM AS A SIGN. IT WAS TIME TO FINISH WITH THE PAST...





IT WASN'T JUST THE VEIL TO WHICH I HAD TO READJUST, THERE WERE ALSO ALL THE IMAGES: THE SIXTY-FIVE-FOOT-HIGH MURALS PRESENTING MARTYRS, ADORNED WITH SLOGANS HONORING THEM, SLOGANS LIKE "THE MARTYR IS THE HEART OF HISTORY" OR "I HOPE TO BE A MARTYR MYSELF" OR "A MARTYR LIVES FOREVER."



ESPECIALLY AFTER FOUR YEARS SPENT IN AUSTRIA, WHERE YOU WERE MORE LIKELY TO SEE ON THE WALLS "BEST SAUSAGES FOR 20 SHILLINGS," THE ROAD TO READJUSTMENT SEEMED VERY LONG TO ME.

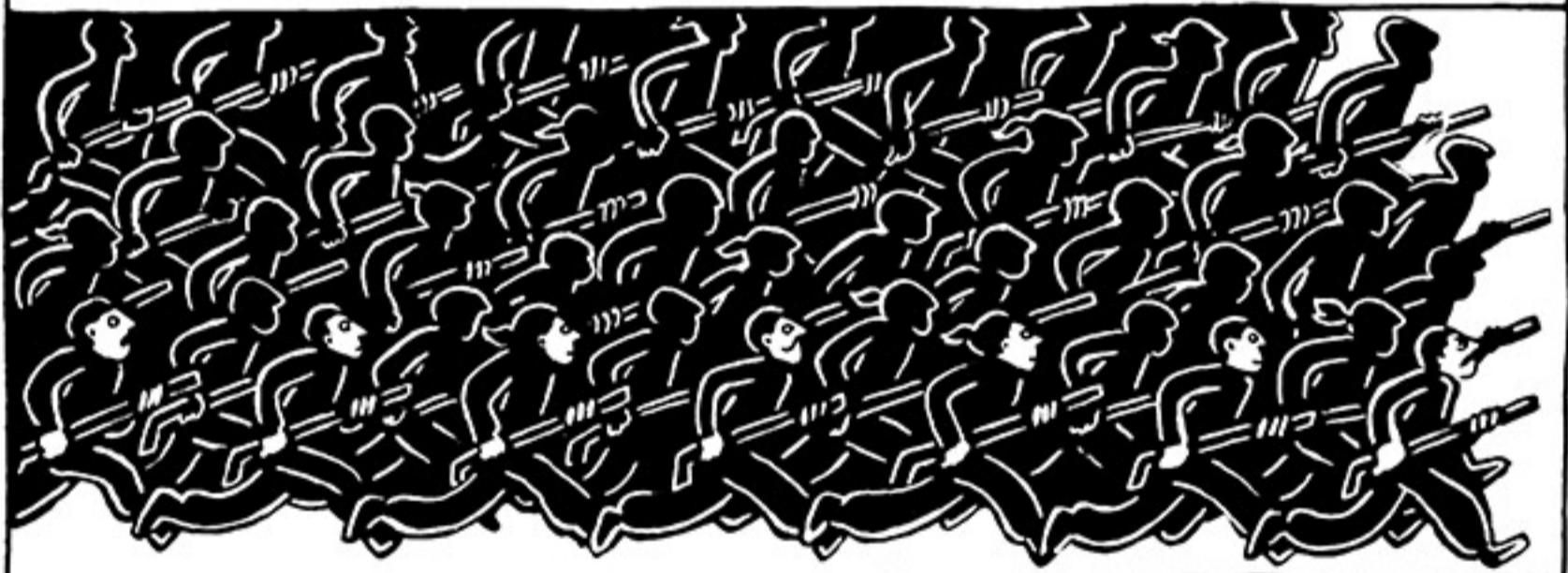








...THE PEACE HADN'T YET BEEN ANNOUNCED WHEN THE ARMED GROUPS OPPOSED TO THE ISLAMIC REGIME, THE IRANIAN MUJAHIDEEN,* ENTERED THE COUNTRY FROM THE IRAQI BORDER WITH THE SUPPORT OF SADDAM HUSSEIN TO LIBERATE IRAN FROM THE HANDS OF ITS FUNDAMENTALIST LEADERS.



*THE TERM "MUJAHIDEEN" ISN'T SPECIFIC TO AFGHANISTAN, IT MEANS A COMBATANT.





OR, THEY WOULD BE EXECUTED.



AND, WELL, MOST OF THEM WERE EXECUTED.





THE JOKE

I HAD BEEN IN TEHRAN FOR TEN DAYS. DESPITE MY RELUCTANCE, IN THE END MY ENTIRE FAMILY CAME TO SEE ME. I DIDN'T KNOW WHETHER OR NOT THEY KNEW ABOUT MY EUROPEAN FAILURE. I WAS SCARED THAT THEY WOULD BE DISAPPOINTED.



AFTER MY FAMILY, IT WAS MY FRIENDS' TURN. I HAD FEWER APPREHENSIONS ABOUT THEM: WE WERE THE SAME AGE, WHICH SHOULD MAKE IT EASIER TO CONNECT.



I WAS WRONG. THEY ALL LOOKED LIKE THE HEROINES OF AMERICAN TV SERIES, READY TO GET MARRIED AT THE DROP OF A HAT, IF THE OPPORTUNITY PRESENTED ITSELF.



SOME DAYS LATER.

LALEH CALLED FOR YOU.

PFFF...

OH!...MY FRIENDS... MY FRIENDS, I FIND THEM ALL SO UNBEARABLY INANE!

YOU KNOW, IT'S NOT ENTIRELY THEIR FAULT. NO ONE IS ASKING THEM TO BE INTELLIGENT! COMPLETELY THE OPPOSITE, IN FACT!

GIVE IT SOME THOUGHT, MY CHILD. THERE MUST BE SOME PEOPLE THAT YOU'D LIKE TO SPEND TIME WITH!

GRANDMA WAS RIGHT. I WOULD HAVE BEEN VERY HAPPY TO SEE THE KIDS I USED TO PLAY WITH IN THE STREET.

I'D LIKE TO SEE ARASH AND KIA AGAIN...

...YES! ARASH AND KIA! KIA ESPECIALLY. WE HAD SO MUCH FUN TOGETHER. AND, HE'S A GUY. HE MUST HAVE SOMETHING OTHER THAN MAKEUP ON HIS MIND.

UHH...

MY MOTHER'S RESPONSE SEEMED NORMAL. SHE NEVER REALLY LIKED HIM. SHE THOUGHT THAT HE WAS BADLY BROUGHT UP AND ENCOURAGED ME TO DO STUPID THINGS.

MOM, DON'T WORRY. WE'RE ALL GROWN UP NOW. IF I SEE HIM, WE'RE NOT GOING TO BREAK WINDOWS, OR ATTACK PEOPLE WITH NAILS.

IT'S JUST THAT KIA...

KIA WHAT?
WELL, HE WAS CALLED UP FOR SERVICE BUT HE PREFERRED TO LEAVE THE COUNTRY ILLEGALLY.
AND WHERE DID HE GO?

NOWHERE... THEY ARRESTED HIM. THEN, LIKE EVERYONE ELSE, HE WAS REQUIRED TO DO HIS MILITARY SERVICE... THEY SENT HIM TO THE FRONT AND...

AND THEN WHAT?
IS HE DEAD?

ALMOST.

ALMOST DEAD???

YES, WELL, HOW DO YOU SAY... HE IS DISABLED.

I DECIDED TO GO SEE HIM. I LEARNED THAT HIS FAMILY HAD MOVED. MY MOTHER SET UP AN INQUIRY IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD AND FINALLY FOUND THEIR TELEPHONE NUMBER.

HELLO? COULD I PLEASE SPEAK TO KIA?

LET ME GET HIM... KIA!! TELEPHONE!

KIA! HI-DO YOU REMEMBER ME?

UHH...NO.

AND "MASSACRE RAMIN WITH NAILS!" DOES THAT RING A BELL?

MARJI! IS IT YOU?

NO, THIS IS HER MOTHER!

HA! HA! HA!

OH IT'S SO GOOD TO HEAR YOUR VOICE!! WHEN CAN WE SEE EACH OTHER?

TOMORROW IF YOU WANT, DO YOU HAVE OUR ADDRESS?

I WAS RELIEVED. HE DIDN'T SEEM "ALMOST DEAD" AT ALL.



THE NEXT DAY, I PUT ON MY BEST CLOTHES. IT HAD SNOWED AGAIN. I SPENT TWO HOURS IN TRAFFIC JAMS, ENOUGH TIME TO ASK MYSELF ALL KINDS OF QUESTIONS: "WHAT IF HE LOST AN EYE?", "WHAT IF HE LOST A LEG?", "WHAT IF HE IS HORRIBLY DISFIGURED?"...



WHEN I FINALLY GOT TO HIS HOUSE, I WASN'T AT ALL SURE IF I WANTED TO GO IN.

MISS, YOU HAVE TO GET OUT. WE'RE THERE.



WHATEVER HIS STATE, I WAS CONVINCED OF THE JUSTICE OF MY MISSION.



WHAT FLOOR ARE YOU GOING TO?

THE THIRD. I'VE COME TO VISIT MY CHILDHOOD FRIEND, KIA ABADI.

OH! THAT'S GREAT!

THE NEIGHBOR'S "THAT'S GREAT" CALMED ME DOWN EVEN MORE. IF SOMETHING REALLY SERIOUS HAD HAPPENED, HE CERTAINLY WOULDN'T HAVE SAID THAT.

I WAS CONFIDENT.









*IN IRAN, IT'S THE HUSBAND WHO MUST PAY HIS WIFE A DOWRY.





I SAW HIM THREE OR FOUR TIMES, THEN HE LEFT FOR THE UNITED STATES. WE WROTE A LITTLE, UNTIL TIME TOOK ITS TOLL AND WE LOST TOUCH WITH EACH OTHER.

SKIING



I THOUGHT THAT BY COMING BACK TO IRAN, EVERYTHING WOULD BE FINE.



THAT I WOULD FORGET THE OLD DAYS.



BUT MY PAST CAUGHT UP WITH ME.



MY SECRETS WEIGHED ME DOWN.



I BECAME DEPRESSED.



I RENTED "LA DOLCE VITA." DON'T YOU WANT TO WATCH IT TOGETHER?



EVEN MY GRANDMA COULD NO LONGER GET ME TO LAUGH.



I WAS ALWAYS IN FRONT OF THE TV. THERE WAS A JAPANESE SERIES, CALLED "OSHIN," THAT I WATCHED OFTEN. IT WAS THE STORY OF A POOR GIRL WHO CAME TO WORK IN TOKYO.



AT FIRST, SHE CLEANED HOUSES, THEN SHE BECAME A HAIRDRESSER AND MET A GUY WHOSE MOTHER WAS OPPOSED TO THEIR MARRIAGE.



MUCH LATER, I GOT TO KNOW A GIRL WHO DUBBED TELEVISION SHOWS. SHE TOLD ME THAT OSHIN WAS IN FACT A GEISHA AND SINCE HER PROFESSION DIDN'T SUIT ISLAMIC MORALS, THE DIRECTOR OF THE CHANNEL HAD DECIDED THAT SHE'D BE A HAIRDRESSER.



TO LIFT ME OUT OF MY DEPRESSION, MY FRIENDS SUGGESTED TAKING ME SKIING. ONE OF THEIR PARENTS HAD A CHALET AT DIZIN.* I DIDN'T WANT TO GO, BUT MY MOTHER INSISTED SO MUCH THAT I ENDED UP ACCEPTING.



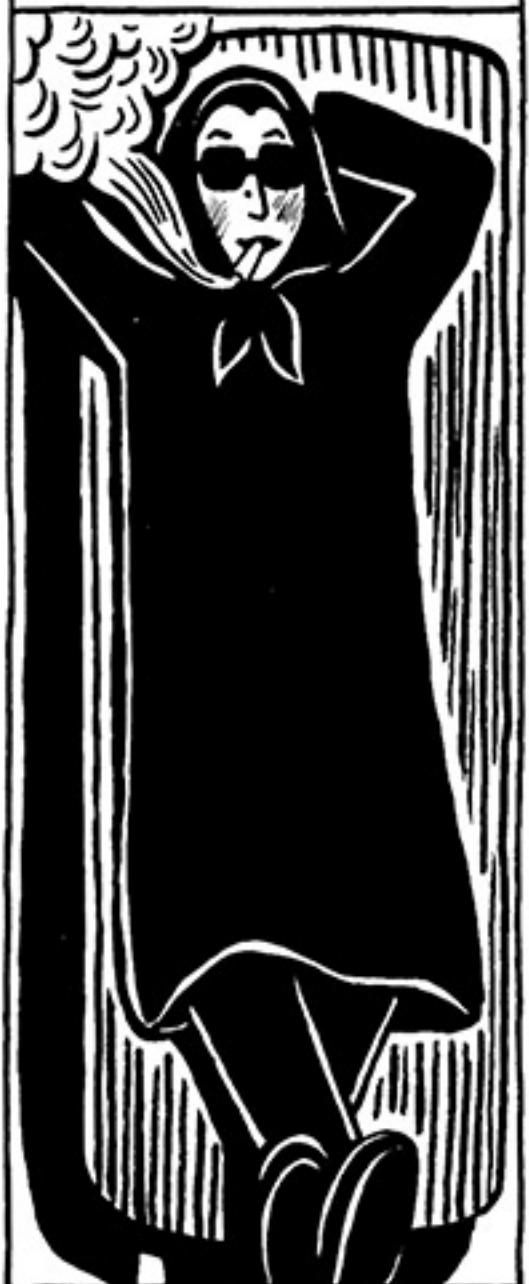
* A SKI RESORT ABOUT THIRTY MILES FROM TEHRAN.

YOU KNOW, YOU CAN RENT EQUIPMENT. IF YOU WANT, WE CAN TEACH YOU HOW TO SKI.



NO, THANKS, I AM VERY HAPPY LIKE THIS.

ACTUALLY, I FELT ON TOP OF THE WORLD. THE MOUNTAIN, THE BLUE SKY, THE SUN, ... ALL OF IT SUITED ME. LITTLE BY LITTLE MY HEAD AND MY SPIRIT TOOK ON SOME COLOR.

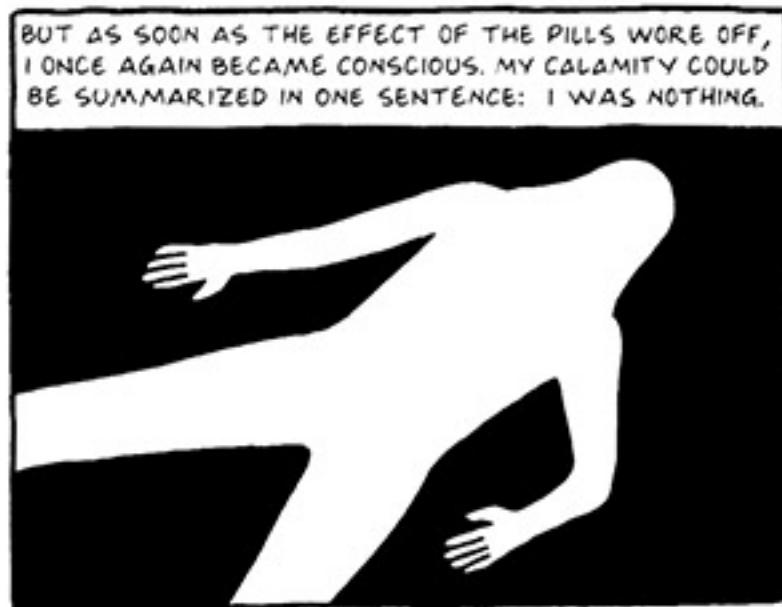




UNDERNEATH THEIR OUTWARD APPEARANCE OF BEING MODERN WOMEN, MY FRIENDS WERE REAL TRADITIONALISTS.



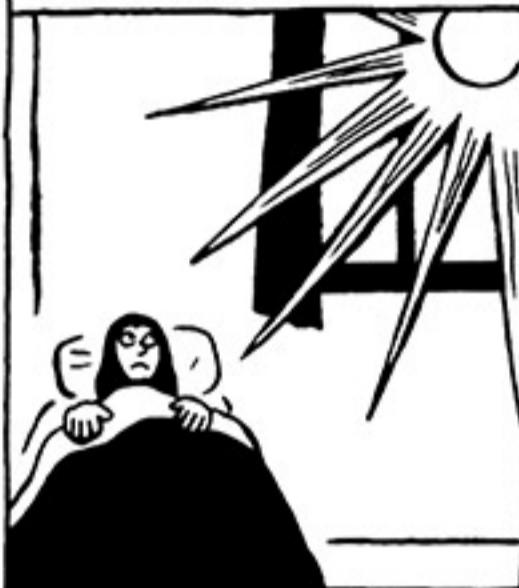




SO I WAITED UNTIL MY WRIST
HEALED TO SWALLOW ALL MY
ANTI-DEPRESSANTS.



I TOLD MYSELF THAT IT WAS THE
LAST TIME I WOULD SEE THE
SUN. I ALSO SPARED A THOUGHT
FOR MY PARENTS.



IT WAS THE END ...



...THREE DAYS LATER ...



IT'S MY HAND! SHIT!
I'M STILL ALIVE!



WHEN I WOKE UP, THE DRUGS THAT I HAD TAKEN
GAVE ME SEVERAL HOURS' WORTH OF HALLUCINATIONS.



SO I WENT TO SEE MY THERAPIST.

YOU SWALLOWED THEM ALL? ARE YOU SURE?

YES ...

THAT DOSE SHOULD HAVE
BEEN ENOUGH TO FINISH
OFF AN ELEPHANT! ...
EVEN THOUGH I'M NOT A
BELIEVER, ASIDE FROM
DIVINE INTERVENTION, I
CAN'T FIND ANY OTHER
EXPLANATION FOR YOUR
SURVIVAL.

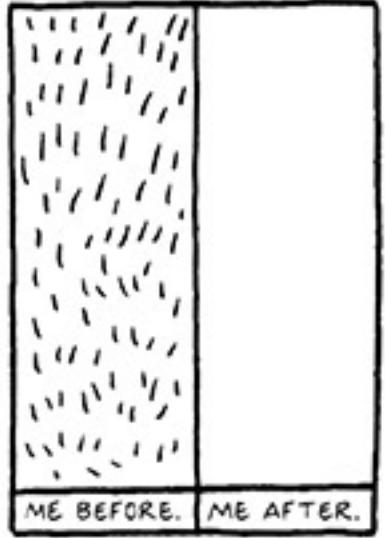


I INFERRED FROM THIS THAT I
WAS NOT MADE TO DIE.

FROM NOW ON, I'M
TAKING MYSELF IN HAND.



BODY HAIR BEING AN OBSESSION OF THE ORIENTAL WOMAN, I BEGAN WITH HAIR REMOVAL.



THEN I GOT RID OF MY OLD CLOTHES.



AND AS A HEALTHY MIND IS
FOUND IN A HEALTHY BODY, I
TOOK UP EXERCISE.



MORE AND MORE,



AND MORE AND MORE,



TO THE POINT WHERE I BECAME AN AEROBICS INSTRUCTOR.

AND FIVE AND SIX...
AND ONE AND TWO...



STRONG AND INVINCIBLE LIKE THIS, I WAS GOING TO MEET MY NEW DESTINY.

THE EXAM

MY PARENTS OBVIOUSLY NEVER KNEW THE REASONS FOR MY METAMORPHOSIS. MY NEW APPROACH TO LIFE DELIGHTED THEM TO THE POINT OF THEIR BUYING ME A CAR, BY WAY OF ENCOURAGEMENT.



I HAD NEW FRIENDS, I WENT TO PARTIES... IN SHORT, MY LIFE HAD TAKEN A COMPLETELY NEW TURN. ONE EVENING IN APRIL 1989, I WAS INVITED TO MY FRIEND ROXANA'S HOUSE.



ASIDE FROM THE LADY OF THE HOUSE, I DIDN'T KNOW ANYONE.

I'M REZA. HOW ARE YOU?
AND YOURSELF?



CAN I SIT DOWN?

PLEASE DO.



WHAT DO YOU DO?

I'M AN AEROBICS INSTRUCTOR, I ALSO TEACH FRENCH.
HAVE YOU LIVED IN FRANCE?



NO, IN AUSTRIA, BUT I STUDIED AT THE LYCÉE FRANÇAIS IN TEHRAN AND IN VIENNA.

WERE YOU AT THE LYCÉE RAZI?*

YES, WERE YOU TOO?

NO, NOT ME, MY FRIENDS.



AND YOU? WHAT DO YOU DO?



PAINTING.

NO WAY!
I PAINT TOO!!



*THE NAME OF THE LYCÉE FRANÇAIS IN TEHRAN.





*A MOUNTAIN CHAIN IN THE WEST OF IRAN



AFTER THIS PARTY, ROXANA NEVER SPOKE TO ME AGAIN. APPARENTLY, HER BEST FRIEND WANTED TO GO OUT WITH REZA ... UNFORTUNATELY, WE DON'T ALWAYS GET WHAT WE WANT.



WE NEEDED EACH OTHER SO MUCH THAT WE VERY QUICKLY STARTED TO TALK ABOUT OUR SHARED FUTURE.

WHAT DO YOU HAVE PLANNED FOR THE FUTURE?

I WANT TO LEAVE HERE. EITHER I'LL GO TO EUROPE, OR TO THE UNITED STATES, BUT I WON'T STAY HERE.

WHERE WILL YOU GO IN EUROPE?

ITALY, FRANCE, SWEDEN, SPAIN, ENGLAND... IT DOESN'T REALLY MATTER. I JUST DON'T WANT TO LIVE IN IRAN ANYMORE.

AND US?

YOU'LL COME WITH ME!

I DON'T WANT TO LEAVE THE COUNTRY RIGHT AWAY.

IT'S BECAUSE YOU ARE STILL NOSTALGIC. YOU'LL SEE, A YEAR FROM NOW PEOPLE WILL DISGUST YOU. ALWAYS INTERFERING IN THINGS THAT DON'T CONCERN THEM.

MAYBE SO, BUT IN THE WEST YOU CAN COLLAPSE IN THE STREET AND NO ONE WILL GIVE YOU A HAND.

DON'T WORRY! WE'LL FIND A SOLUTION!

HAPPILY, GETTING A VISA PROVED TO BE EXCEEDINGLY DIFFICULT. SO WE DECIDED TO STUDY FOR THE NATIONAL EXAM* SO AS NOT TO WASTE YEARS OF OUR LIVES DOING NOTHING. IT WAS VERY HARD! IT HAD BEEN SIX YEARS SINCE REZA HAD GRADUATED HIGH SCHOOL. HE WAS OUT OF PRACTICE FOR STUDYING. AS FOR ME, I HADN'T READ OR WRITTEN IN PERSIAN SINCE I WAS FOURTEEN.



* IN IRAN, YOU CAN'T ENTER UNIVERSITY WITHOUT HAVING PASSED THE NATIONAL EXAM.

JUNE 1989. AFTER TWO MONTHS OF HARD WORK, THE BIG DAY FINALLY ARRIVED.



THE CANDIDATES TOOK THE EXAMS IN DIFFERENT PLACES, ACCORDING TO THEIR SEX.



THERE WERE QUESTIONNAIRES SPECIFIC TO EACH SECTION.

TO GET INTO THE COLLEGE OF ART, IN ADDITION TO THE OTHER TESTS, THERE WAS A DRAWING QUALIFICATION. I WAS SURE THAT ONE OF ITS SUBJECTS WOULD BE "THE MARTYRS," AND FOR GOOD REASON! SO I PRACTICED BY COPYING A PHOTO OF MICHELANGELO'S "LA PIETÀ" ABOUT TWENTY TIMES. ON THAT DAY, I REPRODUCED IT BY PUTTING A BLACK CHADOR ON MARY'S HEAD, AN ARMY UNIFORM ON JESUS, AND THEN I ADDED TWO TULIPS, SYMBOLS OF THE MARTYRS,* ON EITHER SIDE SO THERE WOULD BE NO CONFUSION.



I WAS VERY PLEASED WITH MY DRAWING.

*IT'S SAID THAT RED TULIPS GROW FROM THE BLOOD OF MARTYRS.

... WE HAD TO WAIT SEVERAL WEEKS BEFORE GETTING THE RESULTS IN THE "ETELAAT,"* WHICH DIDN'T COME OUT UNTIL 3 P.M. WE WERE IN FRONT OF THE KIOSKS AT 1.



* NAME OF A NEWSPAPER.



KNOWING THAT 40% OF THE PLACES WERE RESERVED FOR CHILDREN OF MARTYRS AND THOSE DISABLED BY THE WAR, THE SEATS WERE LIMITED. IT WAS AN UNEXPECTED STROKE OF LUCK THAT WE BOTH PASSED THE NATIONAL EXAM.

SINCE WE WEREN'T MARRIED, WE COULDN'T KISS EACH OTHER IN PUBLIC, OR EVEN GIVE ONE ANOTHER A FRIENDLY HUG TO EXPRESS OUR EXTREME JOY. WE RISKED IMPRISONMENT AND BEING WHIPPED. SO WE GOT INTO THE CAR QUICKLY ...



... WHERE HE PUT HIS HAND ON MINE.



IT WAS EXTRAORDINARY.







THE MAKEUP

OUR SUCCESS ON THE EXAM MADE REZA AND ME MORE CALM ABOUT OUR SHARED FUTURE. NOW WE WERE ABLE TO STAY TOGETHER, BECAUSE NEITHER OF US WAS GOING TO LEAVE IRAN WITHOUT THE OTHER. FROM THEN ON, WE BECAME A REAL COUPLE, WHICH NATURALLY MEANT THAT WE BEGAN TO PICK ON EACH OTHER. I REPROACHED HIM FOR NOT BEING ACTIVE ENOUGH. HE CHOSE TO CRITICIZE MY PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS: NOT ELEGANT ENOUGH, NOT MADE-UP ENOUGH, ETC., ETC., ...



AT THE TIME, I THOUGHT I SHOULD MAKE SOME EFFORTS... ONE DAY, WHEN WE HAD A RENDEZVOUS IN FRONT OF THE SAVAFIEH BAZAAR,* I ARRIVED VERY MADE-UP TO GIVE HIM A SURPRISE.



* NAME OF A SHOPPING CENTER

SUDDENLY, FROM THE OTHER SIDE OF THE STREET, I SAW A CAR FULL OF GUARDIANS OF THE REVOLUTION ARRIVE, FOLLOWED BY A BUS. WHEN THEY CAME WITH THE BUS, IT MEANT A RAID.



THIS CALLED FOR ACTION.



THAT'S IT!! I'VE GOT IT!



I HAD TO DISTRACT THEM. I HAD TO GO SEE THEM BEFORE THEY SAW ME.

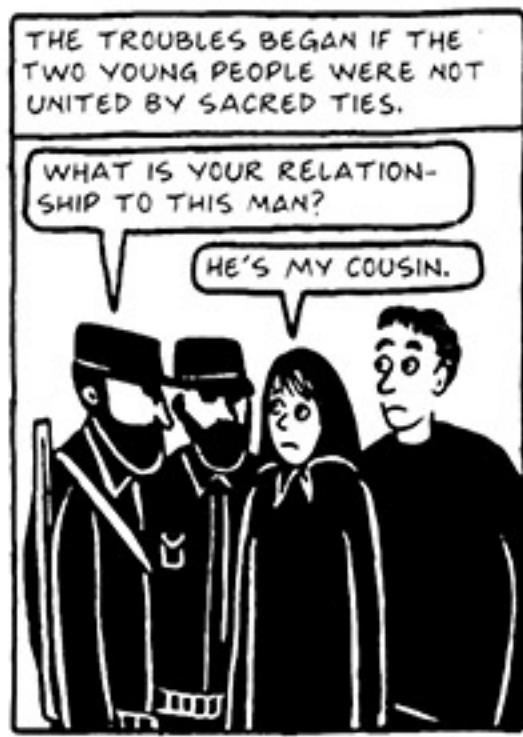


WHERE'S THE BASTARD, I'LL SHUT HIM UP ONCE AND FOR ALL!









*THE COMMISSARIAT OF THE GUARDIANS OF THE REVOLUTION.

**AT THE TIME, THE MONTHLY SALARY OF A GOVERNMENT WORKER.









THE CONVOCATION

SEPTEMBER 1989. I WAS FINALLY A STUDENT.



THE BREAKFAST THAT MY MOTHER HAD PREPARED JUST LIKE SHE USED TO, THE MELANCHOLY ATMOSPHERE OF THE BEGINNING OF AUTUMN, MY UNIFORM... EVERYTHING REMINDED ME OF THE BEGINNING OF SCHOOL.



REZA FOUND ME ON THE WAY.



DO YOU THINK THAT WE CAN TELL PEOPLE WE'RE TOGETHER?

ARE YOU CRAZY? NOT ON YOUR LIFE. IF THE ADMINISTRATION DISCOVERS OUR RELATIONSHIP, WE'LL BE KICKED OUT! TO THEM, WE'RE BREAKING THE LAW!



HE WAS EXAGGERATING A LITTLE. FROM THE MOMENT WE ARRIVED AT UNIVERSITY, ALTHOUGH BOYS AND GIRLS DIDN'T MIX, THIS DIDN'T STOP THEM FROM THROWING EACH OTHER FLIRTATIOUS LOOKS.



NATURALLY! AFTER ALL, LAW OR NO LAW, THESE WERE HUMAN BEINGS.

MANY OF THE STUDENTS KNEW ONE ANOTHER ALREADY. IN LISTENING TO THEM, I UNDERSTOOD THAT THEY'D TAKEN THE PREPARATORY CLASSES TOGETHER. OUR FIRST LESSON WAS "ART HISTORY."

WHAT IS GENERALLY KNOWN AS ARAB ART AND ARCHITECTURE SHOULD IN FACT BE CALLED THE ART OF THE ISLAMIC EMPIRE, WHICH STRETCHED FROM CHINA TO SPAIN. THIS ART IS A CROSS BETWEEN INDIAN, PERSIAN, AND MESOPOTAMIAN ART. THOSE WHOM WE CONSIDER, LIKE AVICENNA, TO BE "ARAB SCHOLARS" ARE FOR THE MOST PART ANYTHING BUT ARABS. EVEN THE FIRST BOOK OF ARABIC GRAMMAR WAS WRITTEN BY AN IRANIAN.



IT WAS FUNNY TO SEE TO WHAT EXTENT THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC WAS NOT ABLE TO PUT AN END TO OUR CHAUVINISM. TO THE CONTRARY! PEOPLE OFTEN COMPARED THE OBSCURANTISM OF THE NEW REGIME TO THE ARAB INVASION. ACCORDING TO THIS LOGIC, "BEING PERSIAN" MEANT "NOT BEING A FANATIC." BUT THIS PARALLEL WENT ONLY SO FAR CONSIDERING THE FACT THAT OUR GOVERNMENT WASN'T COMPOSED OF ARAB INVADERS BUT PERSIAN FUNDAMENTALISTS.

AT LUNCH TIME.

THE PROFESSOR IS VERY INTERESTING, BUT OH MY! DOES HIS MOUTH SMELL. EVEN THIRTY FEET AWAY YOU CAN SMELL HIS JACKAL'S BREATH!

AMONG THE GUYS, A FEW EVEN HAVE HAIR CUTS!!! MY GOD!

HA! HA! HA!

HEY! LOOK, THE GUY IN THE BLUE SHIRT... HE'S REALLY NOT BAD!

DESPITE THEIR UPTIGHT APPEARANCE, THE GIRLS IN MY CLASS SEEMED TO BE QUITE THE COMEDIANS.

THEY WERE TALKING ABOUT REZA. I SUDDENLY FOUND THEM A LOT LESS FUNNY.

HI, I'M SHOUKA.

AND I'M NIYOOSHA.

NICE TO MEET YOU. I'M MARJANE.

NIYOOSHA HAD VERY GREEN EYES WHICH MADE HER THE MOST SOUGHT AFTER GIRL AT THE COLLEGE. (THE MAJORITY OF IRANIANS HAVE BLACK EYES.)

YOU'VE LIVED ABROAD?

YES, HOW DID YOU KNOW?

BECAUSE OF YOUR MAGHNAEH* YOU WEAR IT LIKE A BEGINNER.

SHOUKA WAS VERY FUNNY. UNFORTUNATELY, WHEN SHE GOT MARRIED TWO YEARS LATER, HER HUSBAND FORBIDDEN HER FROM ASSOCIATING WITH ME. TO HIM, I WAS AN AMORAL PERSON.

*HOODED HEAD-SCARF

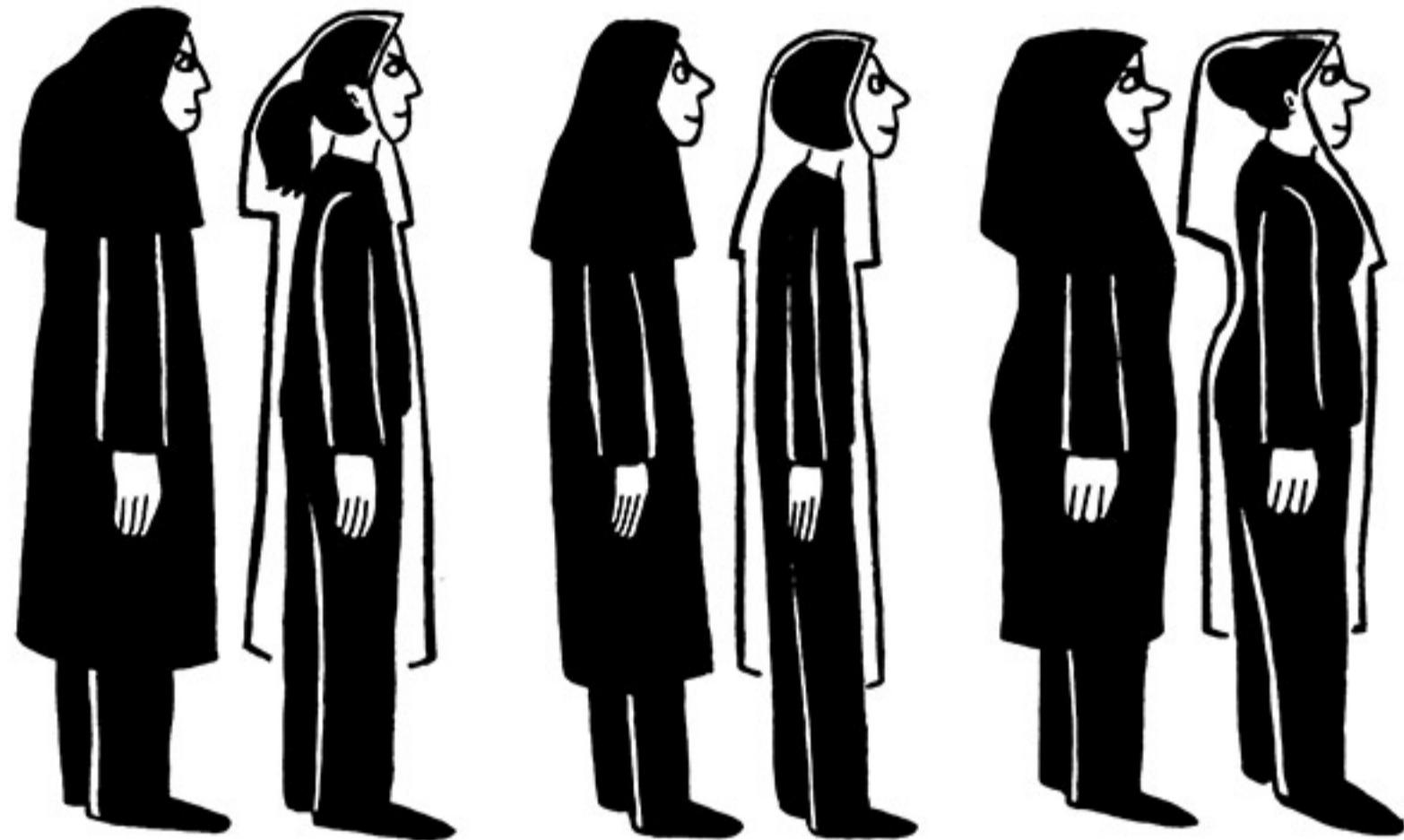
IT'S TRUE THAT WEARING THE VEIL WAS A REAL SCIENCE. YOU HAD TO MAKE A SPECIAL FOLD, LIKE THIS:

NOT A HAIR SHOWS IN PROFILE.

BUT YOU SEE TUFTS FROM THE FRONT.

NEVERTHELESS, THINGS WERE EVOLVING... YEAR BY YEAR, WOMEN WERE WINNING AN EIGHTH OF AN INCH OF HAIR AND LOSING AN EIGHTH OF AN INCH OF VEIL.

WITH PRACTICE, EVEN THOUGH THEY WERE COVERED FROM HEAD TO FOOT, YOU GOT TO THE POINT WHERE YOU COULD GUESS THEIR SHAPE, THE WAY THEY WORE THEIR HAIR AND EVEN THEIR POLITICAL OPINIONS. OBVIOUSLY, THE MORE A WOMAN SHOWED, THE MORE PROGRESSIVE AND MODERN SHE WAS.



ONE WEEK LATER.

THE CLEAN-SHAVEN GUY, RIGHT OVER THERE, WHAT'S HIS NAME...? REZA, YES, REZA, DO YOU KNOW HIM?

NO, WHY?

WELL, HE CAN'T STOP OGLING YOU, HEE! HEE! HEE! HEE!



NO, NO, I HADN'T EVEN NOTICED HIM!

YOU'RE RIGHT, HE'S NOT THAT GREAT.

OH, HE'S NOT SO BAD.

SEE, YOU DO KNOW HIM!

FACED WITH THE PERSPICACITY OF MY GIRLFRIENDS, I HAD NO CHOICE BUT TO ADMIT THE TRUTH.

STUDENTS, STUDENTS.

SUCH DISCERNMENT!

I CONFESS! I SAW HIM LAST NIGHT IN YOUR CAR.

DIRTY LIAR! YOU REALLY GOT ME!

SHHH! LISTEN TO WHAT THE DIRECTOR IS SAYING!

YOUR PRESENCE IS REQUIRED AT 3 O'CLOCK AT THE MAIN CAMPUS! ALL THOSE WHO ARE ABSENT WILL BE BARRED FROM ATTENDING CLASSES FOR TWO WEEKS!

IT WAS AT THE MAIN CAMPUS THAT THE SUBJECTS COMMON TO ALL THE COLLEGES WERE TAUGHT. IT WAS MUCH MORE REPRESSIVE THAN OUR COLLEGE. AS ARTISTS, WE BENEFITED FROM A LITTLE MORE LIBERTY. FOR EXAMPLE, THERE GIRLS AND BOYS HAD TO TAKE DIFFERENT STAIRCASES, WHILE WHERE WE WERE, EVERYONE USED THE SAME STAIRCASE.

I DIDN'T GET THE STAIRCASE THING, BECAUSE IN ANY CASE, WE FOUND OURSELVES TOGETHER UPSTAIRS. BUT SHOUKA SAID THAT IT WAS TO KEEP THE BOYS FROM WATCHING OUR BUTTS WHILE WE CLIMBED.

I THINK SHE WAS RIGHT.

ONCE IN THE AMPHITHEATER, WE DISCOVERED THE REASON FOR OUR CONVOCATION: THE ADMINISTRATION HAD ORGANIZED A LECTURE WITH THE THEME OF "MORAL AND RELIGIOUS CONDUCT," TO SHOW US THE RIGHT PATH.

WE CAN'T ALLOW OURSELVES TO BEHAVE LOOSELY! IT'S THE BLOOD OF OUR MARTYRS WHICH HAS NOURISHED THE FLOWERS OF OUR REPUBLIC. TO ALLOW ONESELF TO BEHAVE INDECENTLY IS TO TRAMPLE ON THE BLOOD OF THOSE WHO GAVE THEIR LIVES FOR OUR FREEDOM. ALSO, I AM ASKING THE YOUNG LADIES PRESENT HERE TO WEAR LESS-WIDE TROUSERS AND LONGER HEAD-SCARVES. YOU SHOULD COVER YOUR HAIR WELL, YOU SHOULD NOT WEAR MAKEUP, YOU SHOULD...









THE SOCKS

TO KEEP US FROM STRAYING OFF THE STRAIGHT PATH, OUR STUDIOS WERE SEPARATED FROM THOSE OF THE BOYS.

I'M YOUR ANATOMY PROFESSOR. IN THE PAST, WE DREW NUDES, BUT THINGS HAVE CHANGED. YOUR MODEL WILL BE COVERED. TRY TO MAKE THE BEST OF IT.



WE TRIED,



WE LOOKED...



... FROM EVERY DIRECTION ...



... AND FROM EVERY ANGLE ...



BUT NOT A SINGLE PART OF HER BODY WAS VISIBLE.



WE NEVERTHELESS LEARNED TO DRAW DRAPES.

AFTER A FEW WEEKS, WE DISCOVERED, ALONG WITH OUR PROFESSOR, THAT IT WAS PREFERABLE TO HAVE A MODEL ON WHOM YOU COULD AT LEAST DISTINGUISH THE LIMBS. OUR DIRECTOR APPROVED.



ONE EVENING, BEFORE THE COLLEGE CLOSED, ONE OF THE SUPERVISORS PAID ME A VISIT.



WHY ARE YOU LOOKING AT THIS MAN?



YES, BUT YOU'RE NOT ALLOWED TO LOOK AT HIM. IT'S AGAINST THE MORAL CODE.



WHAT WOULD YOU HAVE ME DO? SHOULD I DRAW THIS MAN WHILE LOOKING AT THE DOOR??!!

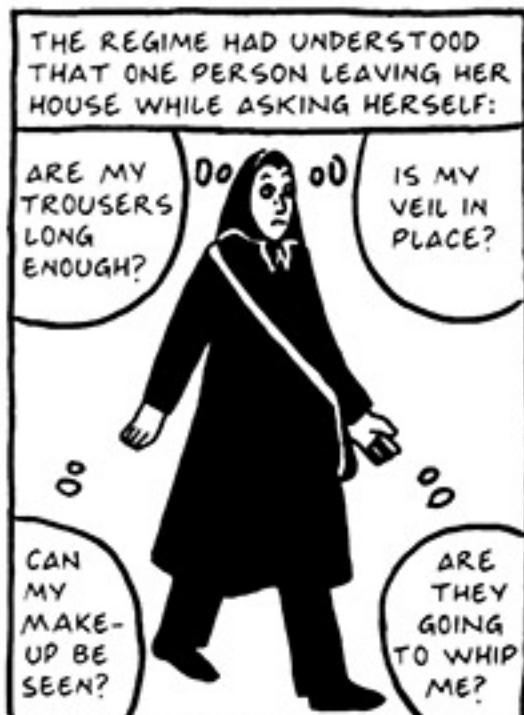


THESE ABSURD SITUATIONS WERE QUITE FREQUENT. ONE DAY, FOR EXAMPLE, I WAS SUPPOSED TO GO SEE MY DENTIST, BUT CLASSES FINISHED LATER THAN EXPECTED.



SUDDENLY, I HEARD A VOICE OVER THE LOUDSPEAKER:







I DIDN'T SAY EVERYTHING I COULD HAVE: THAT SHE WAS FRUSTRATED BECAUSE SHE WAS STILL A VIRGIN AT TWENTY-SEVEN! THAT SHE WAS FORBIDDING ME WHAT WAS FORBIDDEN TO HER! THAT TO MARRY SOMEONE THAT YOU DON'T KNOW, FOR HIS MONEY, IS PROSTITUTION. THAT DESPITE HER LOCKS OF HAIR AND HER LIPSTICK, SHE WAS ACTING LIKE THE STATE. THAT... ETC.... THAT DAY, HALF THE CLASS TURNED ITS BACK ON ME.

HAPPILY, THERE WAS STILL THE OTHER HALF. LITTLE BY LITTLE, I GOT TO KNOW THE STUDENTS WHO THOUGHT LIKE ME.



WE WOULD GO TO ONE ANOTHER'S HOUSES, WHERE WE POSED FOR EACH OTHER ... WE HAD AT LAST FOUND A PLACE OF FREEDOM.



AT FIRST THERE WERE ONLY FIVE OF US.



THEN ...



AND FINALLY ...



OUR PROFESSOR WAS SO HAPPY TO SEE THE SKETCHES WE DID AT HOME.

BRAVO! AN ARTIST SHOULD DEFY THE LAW! I CONGRATULATE YOU!



THE MORE TIME PASSED, THE MORE I BECAME CONSCIOUS OF THE CONTRAST BETWEEN THE OFFICIAL REPRESENTATION OF MY COUNTRY AND THE REAL LIFE OF THE PEOPLE, THE ONE THAT WENT ON BEHIND THE WALLS.



OUR BEHAVIOR IN PUBLIC AND OUR BEHAVIOR IN PRIVATE WERE POLAR OPPOSITES.



... THIS DISPARITY MADE US SCHIZOPHRENIC.

TO FIND A SEMBLANCE OF EQUILIBRIUM, WE PARTIED ALMOST EVERY NIGHT ...



... BUT EVEN IN OUR HOMES,
THEY DIDN'T LEAVE US ALONE.



COME ALONG YOU LITTLE BASTARD! YOU'RE ORGANIZING PARTIES! I'LL CURE YOU OF YOUR TASTE FOR PLEASURE!



... BUT WE QUICKLY GOT USED TO IT. WE WOULD EVEN ARRIVE LAUGHING.



THEN CAME THE USUAL SPIEL ...

... AGAINST THE MORAL CODE ...
THE BLOOD OF MARTYRS ...
TWENTY THOUSAND TUMANS ...



OUR PARENTS PAID AND WE WERE RELEASED.



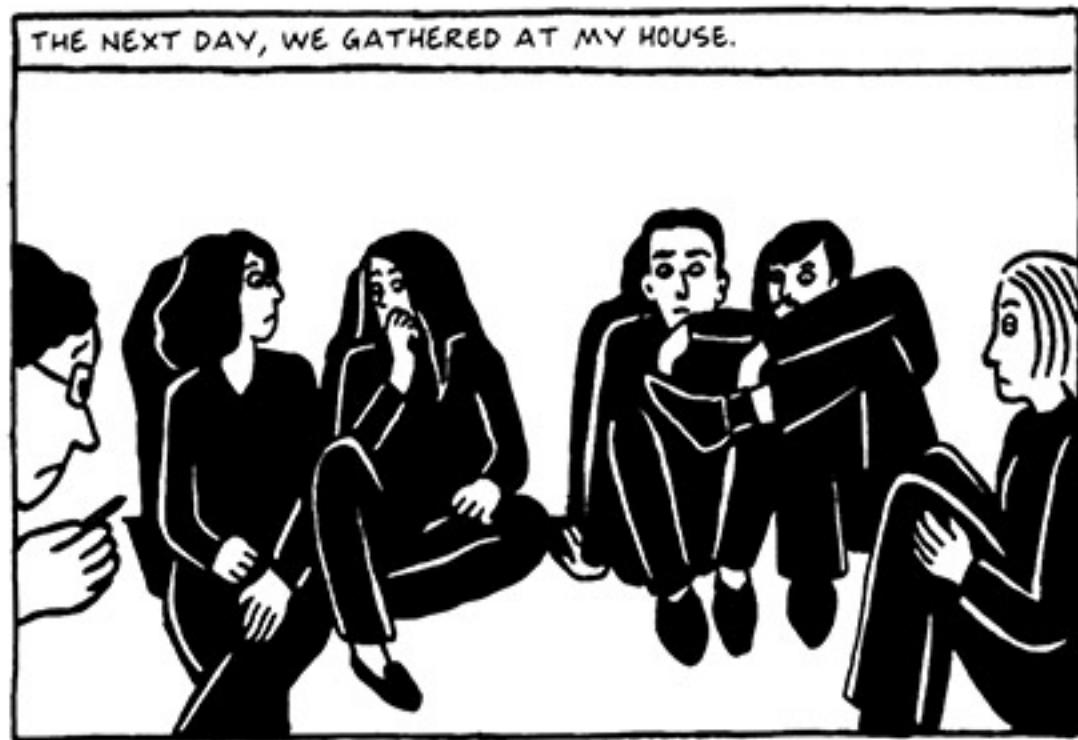
AND THEN ONE NIGHT.











THE WEDDING



A FEW DAYS LATER, MY DECISION WAS MADE: I WAS GOING TO GET MARRIED. I ANNOUNCED IT TO MY FATHER. HE INVITED US, ME AND REZA, TO A RESTAURANT TO TALK ABOUT IT.



AFTER DINNER.

AS YOUR FUTURE FATHER-IN-LAW, I'M TAKING THE LIBERTY OF ASKING YOU THREE THINGS.



FIRST: YOU ARE SURELY AWARE THAT IN THIS COUNTRY A WOMAN'S "RIGHT TO DIVORCE" IS NOT GUARANTEED. SHE ONLY HAS IT IF HER HUSBAND ALLOWS THIS OPTION DURING THE SIGNING OF THE MARRIAGE CERTIFICATE. MY DAUGHTER MUST ENJOY THIS RIGHT.



SECOND: MY WIFE AND I HAVE RAISED OUR DAUGHTER WITH COMPLETE FREEDOM. IF SHE SPENDS HER WHOLE LIFE IN IRAN, SHE'LL WITHER. I'M THEREFORE ASKING THE BOTH OF YOU TO LEAVE TO CONTINUE YOUR STUDIES IN EUROPE AFTER YOUR DIPLOMA. YOU WILL HAVE MY FINANCIAL SUPPORT.



THIRD: LIVE TOGETHER AS LONG AS YOU FEEL TRULY HAPPY. LIFE IS TOO SHORT TO BE LIVED BADLY.



WAITER, THE CHECK, PLEASE!

YES, SIR.



NEXT, I CALLED MY MOTHER AT MY AUNT'S
HOUSE IN VANCOUVER.

HELLO, MOM! HOW ARE YOU?

MUCH BETTER
NOW THAT I'VE
HEARD YOUR
VOICE!

MOM, I HAVE SOME VERY
BIG NEWS TO TELL YOU...
I'M GETTING MARRIED!

YOU'RE GETTING
MARRIED?
BUT TO
WHOM??

WHO DO YOU
THINK? TO
REZA, OF
COURSE!

BUT YOU ARE
STILL TOO YOUNG!
LISTEN! YOU WAIT
UNTIL I GET BACK.
I'LL BE THERE IN
THREE WEEKS.
WE'LL TALK ABOUT
IT AGAIN THEN.

WELL, SHE DOESN'T APPROVE.

SO?

I HALF EXPECTED THAT... IT'S NOT
SERIOUS. I'LL TALK TO HER. DON'T
WORRY.

I NEVER KNEW WHAT THEY SAID TO EACH OTHER,
NEVERTHELESS WHEN MY MOTHER GOT BACK TO
TEHRAN...

OH MY DARLING, I'LL MAKE ALL THE ARRANGEMENTS.
THIS CEREMONY MUST BE WORTHY OF YOU.





FIRST, WE WENT BEFORE THE MULLAH.

MR. REZA... DO YOU TAKE MISS MARJANE...
MISS MARJANE... DO YOU TAKE MR. REZA...

YES!

YES!

THEN IT WAS FOLKLORE'S TURN.
TRADITION REQUIRED THAT A
HAPPILY MARRIED WOMAN RUB
TWO SUGAR LOAVES ABOVE OUR
HEADS TO PASS ON HER JOY
AND PROSPERITY.



TRADITION ALSO REQUIRED
THAT WE PLUNGE OUR FINGERS
IN HONEY...



AND THAT WE SUCK ONE
ANOTHER'S FINGERS TO BEGIN
OUR MARRIED LIFE ON A SWEET
NOTE.



THEN CAME THE GIFTS.



SO, WHEN CAN WE
EXPECT KIDS?

SOON.



YOU LOOK RADIANT!

THANK YOU!

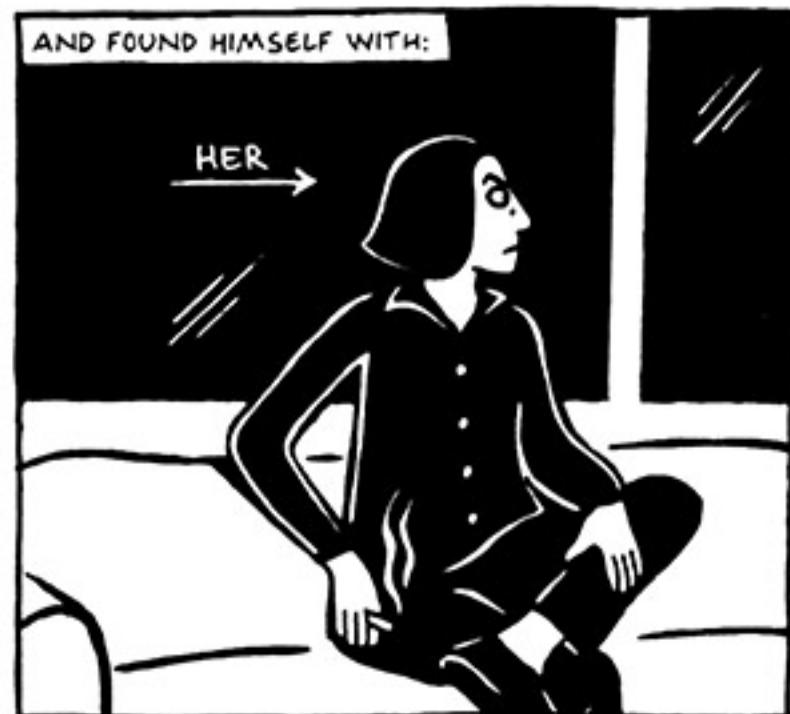


ARE YOU THE BRIDE?

HEE! HEE! HEE!
NO, SHE IS!







AFTER ONE MONTH OF MARRIAGE, WE SET UP SEPARATE BEDROOMS.



HE HAD HIS LIFE ...

WHERE'S YOUR WIFE?

ON VACATION, WITH HER COUSIN.



...AND I HAD MINE.

AND REZA'S WELL?

YEAH, HE'S WITH HIS BROTHER.



...WE WERE KEEPING UP APPEARANCES IN PUBLIC.

IS SHE GOING TO SHUT HER BIG MOUTH?

WHAT AN ASS!



BUT AS SOON AS WE WERE ALONE.

YOU NEVER WANT TO GO OUT! IF I HAVE TO GO EVERYWHERE ALONE, WHAT'S THE POINT OF LIVING TOGETHER?



I LET YOU DO WHATEVER YOU WANT! I'M NOT ONE OF THOSE MACHO MEN WHO EXPECTS YOU TO REPORT BACK! SO LEAVE ME ALONE!



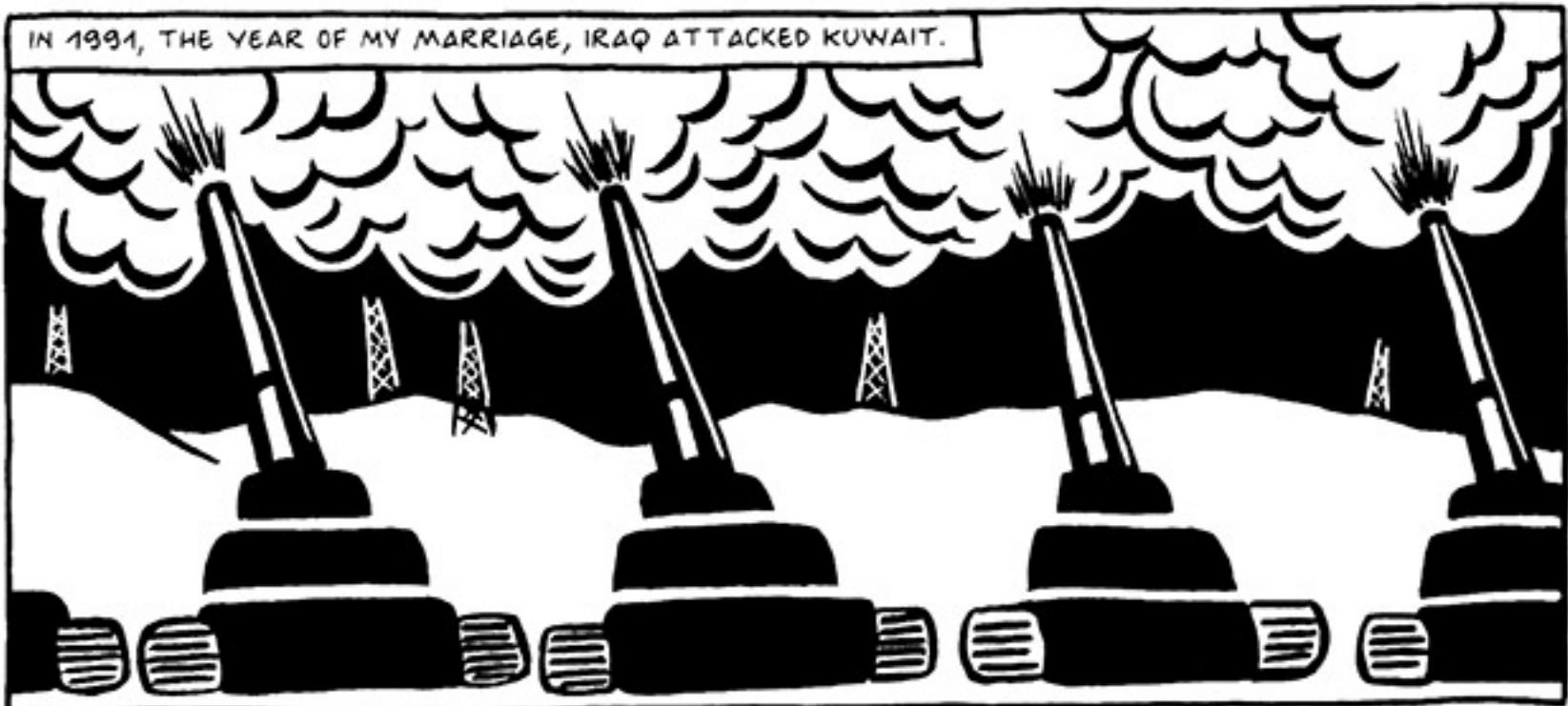
IN THE SPACE OF TWO MONTHS, WE WENT FROM WEEKLY FIGHTS TO DAILY INSULTS.





THE SATELLITE

IN 1991, THE YEAR OF MY MARRIAGE, IRAQ ATTACKED KUWAIT.



SERVES THEM RIGHT! THEY SUPPORTED THAT BASTARD SADDAM HUSSEIN FOR EIGHT YEARS AGAINST US! THEY SHOULD REAP WHAT THEY SOWED!



SADDAM IS OVERARMED AND THE KUWAITIS CONTINUE TO SURPASS THEIR OIL PRODUCTION QUOTA! LET THEM EXTERMINATE EACH OTHER!



NOW THAT IRAN HAS DECLARED ITSELF NEUTRAL IN THIS AFFAIR, THE KUWAITIS ARE APOLOGIZING FOR HAVING SUPPORTED OUR ENEMY! SOON THEY'LL EVEN COME EXILE THEMSELVES HERE!



THAT'S WHAT THEY DID.

THE KUWAITI IMMIGRANTS WERE EASY TO IDENTIFY. THEY HAD VERY MODERN CARS, IN CONTRAST TO IRANIANS, ECONOMICALLY DESTROYED AFTER THE LONG YEARS OF WAR. MY ONLY CONTACT WITH THEM WAS ONE SUMMER DAY IN THE STREET.



WHEN I RECOUNTED THIS MISADVENTURE TO AN UNCLE WHO KNEW KUWAIT WELL, HE TOLD ME: "THERE, AS IN ALL THE ARAB COUNTRIES, WOMEN ARE SO LACKING IN RIGHTS THAT FOR A KUWAITI, A GIRL WHO WALKS OUTSIDE WHILE DRINKING A COKE CAN'T BE ANYTHING BUT A PROSTITUTE."

ASIDE FROM THESE LITTLE DISAPPOINTMENTS, WE DIDN'T FEEL AT ALL CONCERNED ABOUT THE EVENTS, EVEN IF THEY WERE TAKING PLACE IN THE PERSIAN GULF, WHICH IS TO SAY, IN OUR BACKYARD!



THIS WAR HAS UNLEASHED A PANIC IN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES ...



PEOPLE ARE FILLING THEIR SHOPPINGCARTS. IT'S LIKE A MADHOUSE IN WESTERN SUPERMARKETS.



... HERE ARE SOME ACCOUNTS:

I LIVED THROUGH THE SECOND WORLD WAR! IT WAS HORRIBLE!



WE HAVE TWO BABIES! WE HAVE TO STOCK UP ON POWDERED MILK AND DIAPERS.



THERE ARE GOING TO BE ATTACKS! THEY'LL COUNTER-ATTACK! THEY'LL COME AFTER US ON OUR OWN TERRITORY!

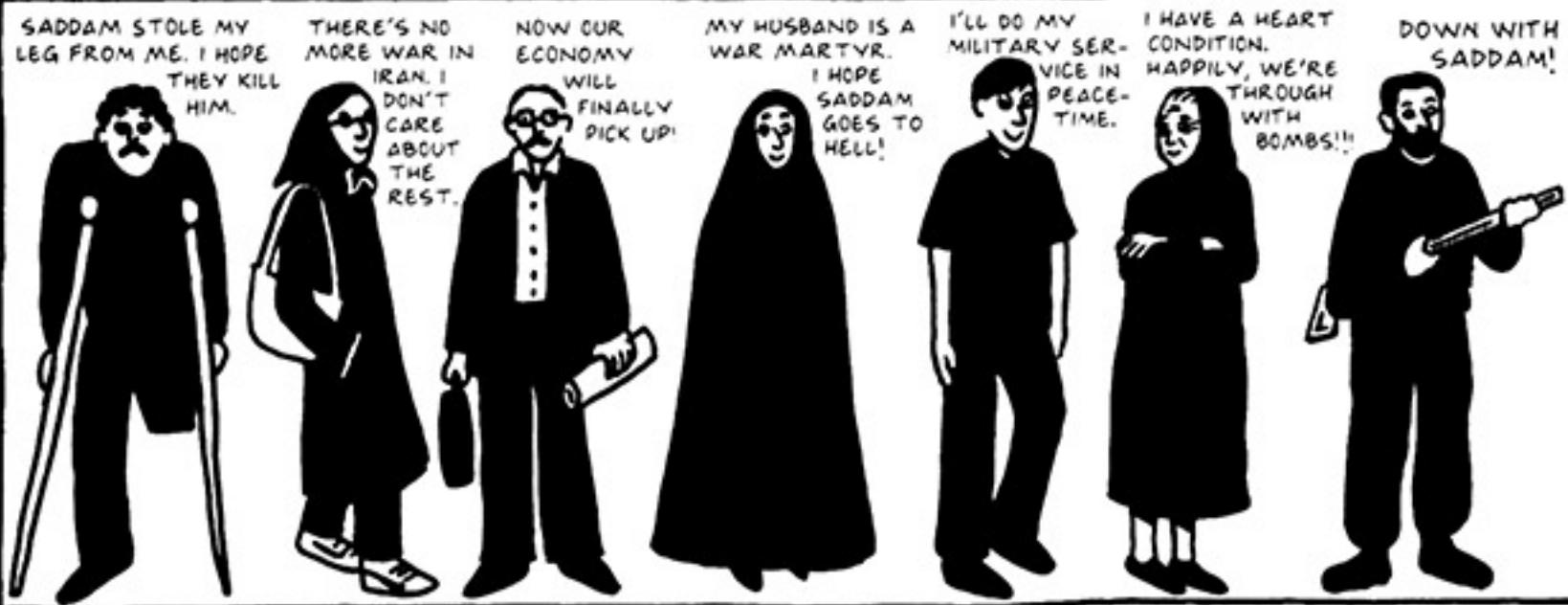


HA! HA! HA!
HA! HA! HA!





AT THE TIME, THIS KIND OF ANALYSIS WASN'T COMMONPLACE. AFTER OUR OWN WAR, WE WERE HAPPY THAT IRAQ GOT ITSELF ATTACKED AND DELIGHTED THAT IT WASN'T HAPPENING IN OUR COUNTRY.



WE WERE FINALLY ABLE TO SLEEP PEACEFULLY WITHOUT FEAR OF MISSILES...

WE NO LONGER NEEDED TO LINE UP WITH OUR FOOD RATION COUPONS ...



AND THEN, THERE WASN'T ANY MORE OPPOSITION. THE PROTESTERS HAD BEEN EXECUTED.



OR HAD FLED THE COUNTRY ANY WAY POSSIBLE.



THE REGIME HAD ABSOLUTE POWER ...



I WASN'T ANY DIFFERENT FROM THEM. ASIDE FROM THE TIME I SPENT WITH MY PARENTS, I LIVED FROM DAY TO DAY WITHOUT ASKING MYSELF ANY QUESTIONS. NEVERTHELESS, IN JANUARY 1992, A BIG EVENT OCCURRED:



THE SATELLITE ANTENNA WAS SYNONYMOUS WITH THE OPENING UP OF THE REST OF THE WORLD.



WE COULD FINALLY EXPERIENCE A VIEW DIFFERENT FROM THE ONE DICTATED BY OUR GOVERNMENT.



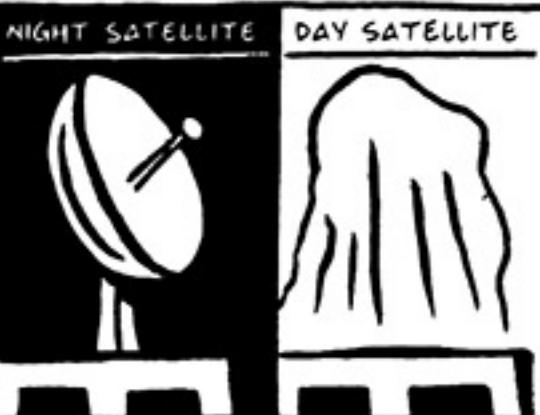
(C-1)) WE SPENT THE ENTIRE DAY AT FARIBORZ'S WATCHING MTV AND EUROSPORT.



SOON THIS DEVICE DECORATED THE ROOFS OF ALL THE BUILDINGS IN THE NORTH OF TEHRAN.*

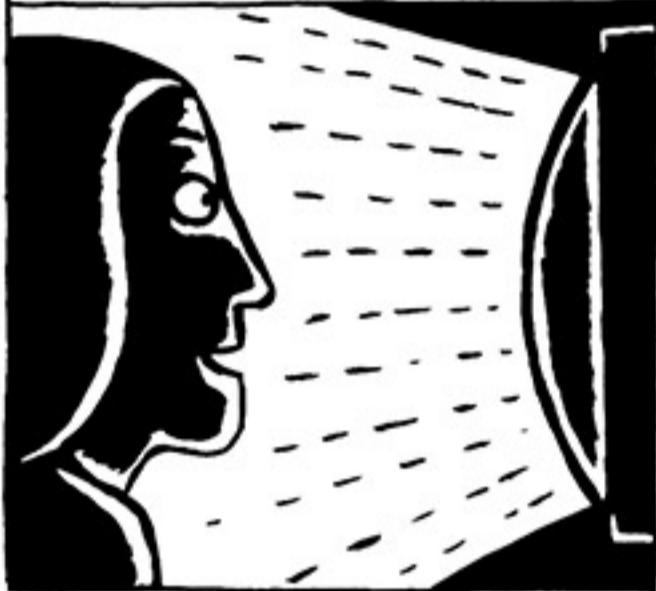


THE REGIME BECAME AWARE THAT THIS NEW PHENOMENON WAS WORKING AGAINST THEIR INDOCTRINATION. IT THEREFORE DECREED A BAN, BUT IT WAS TOO LATE. PEOPLE WHO HAD TASTED IMAGES OTHER THAN THOSE OF BEARDED MEN RESISTED BY HIDING THEIR ANTENNAS DURING THE DAY.



*THE CHIC NEIGHBORHOODS

MY PARENTS PROCURED ONE FOR THEMSELVES, TOO. FROM THEN ON I SPENT WHOLE DAYS AND NIGHTS AT THEIR HOUSE WATCHING TV.



THE PROGRAM DIDN'T MATTER. FROM THE MOMENT THERE WERE BEAUTIFUL PEOPLE, I WAS HAPPY. ONE NIGHT ...



LISTEN, WE NEED TO TALK!

WAIT, WAIT, THEY'RE GOING TO ARREST HIM!

NO! WE'RE GOING TO TALK FIRST.

BUT ... WHAT'S GOT INTO YOU??

THIS MORNING WHEN I LEFT FOR WORK, YOU WERE ON THE SOFA. I COME HOME TWELVE HOURS LATER, AND YOU ARE STILL IN THE SAME PLACE.

WHAT'S GOING ON? IS IT YOUR MARRIAGE THAT'S MAKING YOU DEPRESSED? I DON'T RECOGNIZE YOU ANYMORE! YOU WERE ALWAYS CURIOUS, YOU READ, YOU WERE INTERESTED IN EVERYTHING! YOU WERE ALWAYS AHEAD OF YOUR YEARS ... NOW ...



... NOW I AM A MARRIED WOMAN. I'M TWENTY-TWO. I'M AN ADULT!

ANYONE CAN BE TWENTY-TWO AND BE MARRIED. IT DOESN'T REQUIRE AN EXCEPTIONAL INTELLECTUAL EFFORT! ... YOU WOULD BE BETTER OFF THINKING ABOUT GETTING YOUR DIPLOMA! IT'S IN LESS THAN A YEAR.

IF THAT'S HOW IT IS, I'M GETTING OUT OF HERE!

GOODBYE THEN.



MY FATHER WAS RIGHT. ANYONE COULD GET MARRIED. IN FACT, EVERYONE WAS GETTING MARRIED. THERE WERE THOSE WHO WERE MARRYING IRANIANS IN AMERICA IN THE HOPES OF ONE DAY BECOMING ACTRESSES IN HOLLYWOOD,



THOSE WHO WERE JOINING THEMSELVES TO RICH OLD MEN,



LUCKIER ONES WITH RICH YOUNG MEN,



THERE WERE ALSO SOME REAL LOVE STORIES, LIKE THAT OF NIYODSHA AND ALI.



... AND THEN THERE WAS REZA AND ME.



AS FOR THE SINGLE ONES, THEY WERE WAITING THEIR TURN:

RIGHT NOW, I HAVE THREE CANDIDATES: ONE IS A DOCTOR BUT HE LIVES IN IRAN, THE OTHER LIVES IN LOS ANGELES BUT HE'S SUPER UGLY AND THE THIRD IS VERY HANDSOME BUT POOR.



MY FATHER WAS SO RIGHT THAT THE NEXT DAY, I APOLOGIZED TO HIM.



I DIDN'T MEAN TO HURT YOU. I JUST WANTED TO SHAKE YOU A LITTLE.



THEN HE RUSHED INTO THE LIBRARY AND CAME BACK WITH THREE BOOKS.



*IRANIAN PRIME MINISTER. HE NATIONALIZED THE OIL INDUSTRY IN 1951.

MY NEW SPHERES OF INTEREST BROUGHT ME INTO CONTACT WITH NEW PEOPLE, OFTEN MUCH OLDER THAN ME. AMONG THEM, A CERTAIN DR. M, AT WHOSE HOUSE ALL THE INTELLECTUALS GATHERED ON THE FIRST MONDAY OF EVERY MONTH.

IN A COUNTRY LIKE OURS, WITH AS MANY RESOURCES AS WE HAVE, IT'S NOT RIGHT THAT 70% OF THE POPULATION SHOULD LIVE BELOW THE POVERTY LINE!

IF MOSSADEGH HAD BEEN ABLE TO SEE OUT HIS PROJECT OF REFORM, IRAN WOULDN'T BE FINDING ITSELF IN THIS SITUATION TODAY.



PUSHED BY MY PARENTS, ENCOURAGED BY DR. M AND HIS FRIENDS, AND ALSO A LITTLE THANKS TO MYSELF, I CHANGED MY LIFE.

ONCE AGAIN, I ARRIVED AT MY USUAL CONCLUSION: ONE MUST EDUCATE ONESELF.



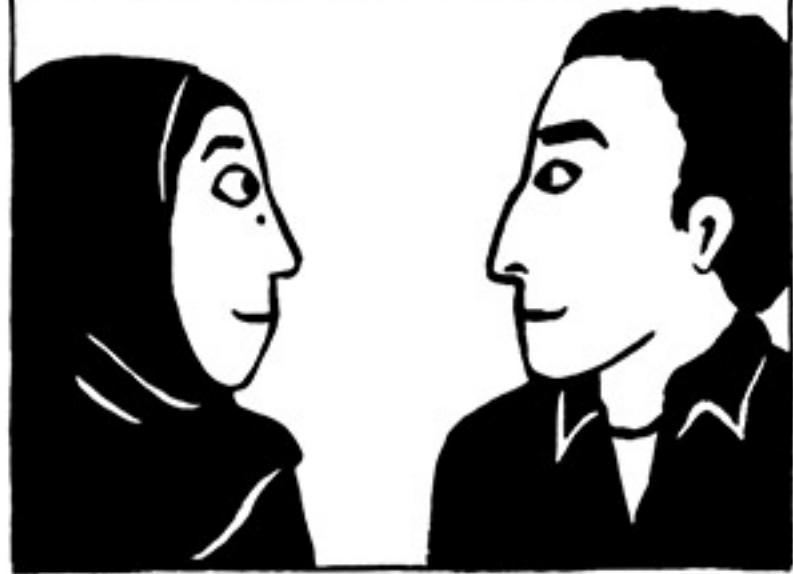
THE END

IN JUNE 1993, AT THE END OF OUR FOURTH YEAR OF STUDY, REZA AND I WERE CALLED IN BY THE PROFESSOR WHO WAS HEAD OF THE VISUAL COMMUNICATIONS DEPARTMENT.

YOU ARE MY TWO BEST STUDENTS. I THEREFORE HAVE A FINAL PROJECT TO PROPOSE TO YOU. IT INVOLVES CREATING A THEME PARK BASED ON OUR MYTHOLOGICAL HEROES.



THE SUBJECT WAS SO EXTRAORDINARY THAT WE FORGOT OUR CONFLICTS AND AGREED TO WORK TOGETHER.



WE SPENT THE WHOLE SUMMER IN LIBRARIES, ...



MUSEUMS, ...



WITH SCHOLARS, RESEARCHERS AND DOCTORS IN THE HUMAN SCIENCES.



FROM JUNE 1993 TO JANUARY 1994, WE WERE SO BUSY THAT WE DIDN'T EVEN FIGHT ONCE.



WE WANTED TO CREATE THE EQUIVALENT OF DISNEYLAND IN TEHRAN. WE HAD THOUGHT OF ALL THE DETAILS: DINING, LODGING, ATTRACTIONS...



WE WORKED NIGHT AND DAY FOR SEVEN MONTHS.



FINALLY CAME THE DAY OF GRADUATION.



BEFORE THE JURY ARRIVED, OUR FRIENDS AND FAMILIES WERE GIVEN A CHANCE TO APPRECIATE OUR WORK UP CLOSE.

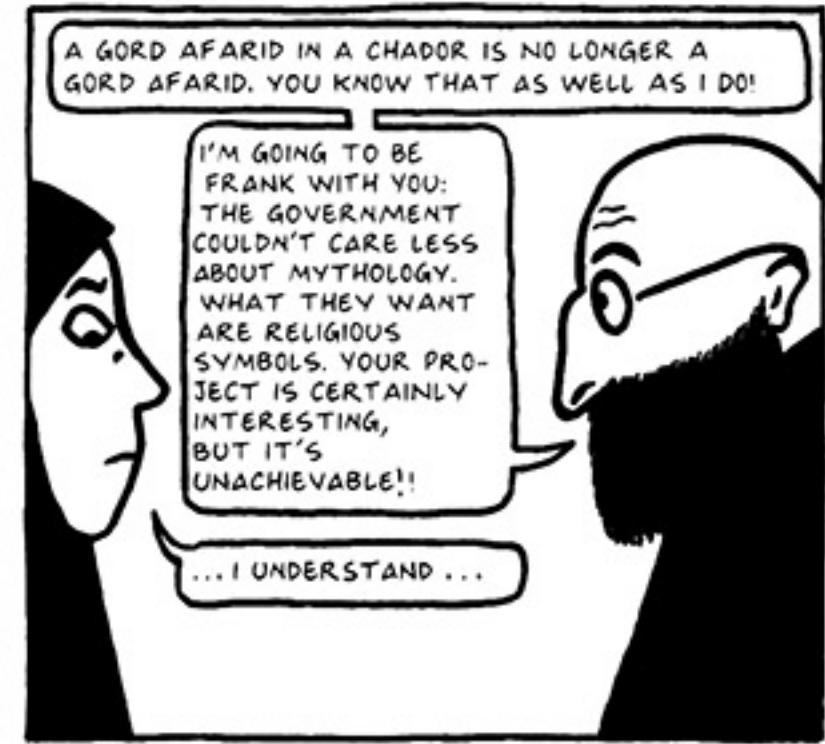


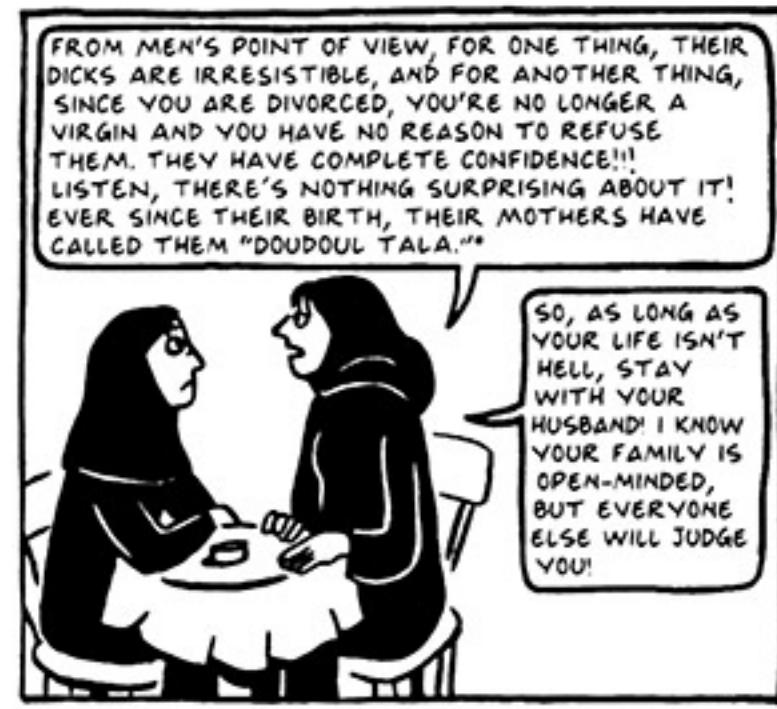
SINCE I WAS A LOT MORE TALKATIVE THAN REZA, WE HAD DECIDED THAT I WOULD DEFEND OUR DISSERTATION.



WE GOT A TWENTY OUT OF TWENTY. AFTER THE DELIBERATION ...







*GOLDEN PENIS

THIS CONVERSATION WITH FARNAZ SHOOK ME, BUT I DIDN'T AGREE WITH HER SUGGESTIONS. I REALIZED SUDDENLY THAT I NO LONGER REALLY LOVED REZA. I HAD TO GET DIVORCED! I RUSHED HOME TO TELL HIM.

SO, CITY HALL?

THEY DON'T WANT OUR PROJECT.

DON'T LET IT GET TO YOU! AFTER ALL, IT'S ONLY ONE PROJECT. WE'LL HAVE OTHERS!

I KNOW... I HAVE TO GO SEE GRANDMA.

GOOD IDEA! SHE'LL KNOW HOW TO COMFORT YOU.



I FOLLOWED MY GRANDMOTHER'S ADVICE. I WAITED. I FOUND A JOB AS AN ILLUSTRATOR AT AN ECONOMICS MAGAZINE.



EVERYTHING WAS GOING WELL. THE RAPPORT WITH MY COLLEAGUES MADE ME FORGET THE REST.

BUT TWO MONTHS LATER, IN MARCH 1994, AN ILLUSTRATOR MADE THE FOLLOWING DRAWING FOR AN ARTICLE ON IRANIAN SOCCER:



ASSASSIN



BUT A FEW HAIRS NOT BEING ENOUGH TO CONDEMN HIM, HE WAS SET FREE AFTER TWO WEEKS. GILA, THE MAGAZINE'S GRAPHIC DESIGNER, AND I WENT TO VISIT HIM.



SO, WHAT HAPPENED? TELL US!

NOTHING! I EXPLAINED TO THEM THAT MY DESIGN CAME FROM A FAIRY TALE IN WHICH A PRINCESS' LOVER CLIMBS INTO HER ROOM BY USING THE LONG HAIR OF HIS LOVED ONE AND, NOT BEING ABLE TO DRAW A WOMAN WITHOUT A VEIL, I HAD DRAWN A BEARDED MAN.



AT THAT, THEY STARTED TO YELL, SAYING THAT I WAS INSINUATING THAT BEARDED MEN WERE SISSIES. I SWORE THAT THAT WASN'T IN ANY WAY MY INTENTION.



AND THEY BEAT ME UP... I HAD BRUISES ALL OVER MY BODY. FINALLY, WELL... YOU PAY DEARLY FOR FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION THESE DAYS.

DING! DONG!



I'M GOING TO GET THE DOOR. IT MUST BE MY WIFE. I'LL BE RIGHT BACK.



HELLO, I'M MANDANA.
MARJANE, I'M VERY HAPPY TO MEET YOU.

AND THIS IS NIMA.





ON OUR WAY BACK.

TO THINK THAT HE WAS
MY HERO FOR TWENTY
DAYS!! HIS WHOLE SPIEL
ABOUT FREEDOM OF
EXPRESSION, WHILE HE
DIDN'T EVEN LET HIS
WIFE SAY ONE WORD!
AH, IRANIAN MEN!

DON'T SAY THAT! IT'S NOT IRANIAN MEN, BUT MEN, PERIOD. TWO YEARS AGO, I WAS GOING OUT WITH A SPANISH DIPLOMAT. ON THE SURFACE, HE BEHAVED BETTER, BUT DEEP DOWN, IT WAS THE SAME THING.

EXCEPT HERE,
ALL THE
LAWS ARE ON
THEIR SIDE!

IF A GUY KILLS TEN WOMEN IN THE PRESENCE
OF FIFTEEN OTHERS, NO ONE CAN CONDEMN
HIM BECAUSE IN A MURDER CASE, WE
WOMEN, WE CAN'T EVEN TESTIFY! HE'S
ALSO THE ONE WHO HAS THE RIGHT TO
DIVORCE AND EVEN IF HE GIVES IT TO YOU,
HE NONTHELESS HAS CUSTODY OF THE
CHILDREN! I HEARD A RELIGIOUS MAN JUSTIFY
THIS LAW BY SAYING THAT MAN WAS THE
GRAIN AND WOMAN, THE EARTH IN WHICH
THE GRAIN GREW, THEREFORE THE CHILD
NATURALLY BELONGED TO HIS FATHER!
DO YOU REALIZE??
I CAN'T TAKE IT ANYMORE.
I WANT TO LEAVE THIS COUNTRY!





BETWEEN JUNE AND SEPTEMBER '94, THE DATE OF MY DEFINITIVE DEPARTURE, I SPENT EVERY MORNING WANDERING IN THE MOUNTAINS OF TEHRAN, WHERE I MEMORIZED EVERY CORNER.



I WENT ON A TRIP WITH MY GRANDMA TO THE SHORE OF THE CASPIAN SEA, WHERE I FILLED MY LUNGS WITH THAT VERY SPECIAL AIR. THAT AIR THAT DOESN'T EXIST ANYWHERE ELSE.



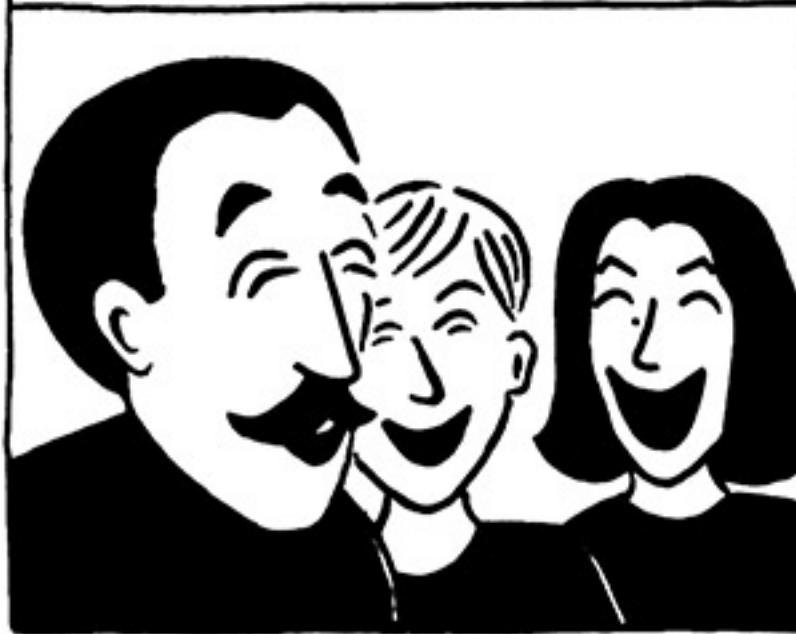
I WENT TO MY GRANDFATHER'S TOMB, WHERE I PROMISED HIM THAT HE WOULD BE PROUD OF ME.



I ALSO WENT BEHIND THE EVINE PRISON WHERE THE BODY OF MY UNCLE ANOOSH LAY IN AN UNMARKED GRAVE, NEXT TO THOUSANDS OF OTHER CADAVERS. I GAVE HIM MY WORD TO TRY TO REMAIN AS HONEST AS POSSIBLE.



I ALSO SPENT SOME WONDERFUL MOMENTS WITH MY PARENTS ...



... UNTIL SEPTEMBER 9, 1994, WHEN, ALONG WITH MY GRANDMA, THEY ACCOMPANIED ME TO MEHRABAD AIRPORT.





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